LANDFALL

A New Zealand Quarterly

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1957

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Notes

SINCE there was a notable dearth of stories among the manuscripts sent to *Landfall* last year, it looked as if writers were saving up their work for the Prose Award. In fact, there were fewer than twenty-five entries for the Award, nearly all of them fiction. It is useless to speculate on the reasons for this small field (less than half the size of that for the Poetry Award in 1953), for they must be many. But one reason, without doubt, is the sheer difficulty of breaking new ground to write imaginatively about life in this country. We have no well-established pictures of ourselves as a people and of the kind of life we lead or would like to lead, because there have been so few writers yet to construct any; the country and the people have very largely still to be created, in terms of literature. An indication of this difficulty is to be found in the oblique approach that some of our best writers have had to adopt in order to focus and discipline their chosen field, their section of the rich, raw, formless life that lay so close to them and was so hard to recreate imaginatively. Such various writers as D'Arcy Cresswell, Frank Sargeson, Maurice Duggan, faced similar problems and adopted the same kind of tactics to deal with them, in their earlier close limitation of subject matter and careful elaboration of a highly personal style. But just because it is difficult for the writer of fiction to make a beginning, he is forced to think hard beforehand and decide carefully exactly what he has to say and how he should say it, which may lead to sounder, stronger, fuller writing than if it were easy to begin. The novelists James Courage and Dan Davin, in choosing fields so well defined by their interest and experience that they were able to work there with a good deal of freedom, were greatly helped by exile, which allowed them to approach their material more directly. Indeed all these writers at some stage have looked at New Zealand from outside, as if through the wrong end of a telescope, where they were well placed to make comparisons and to seize what for them is distinctive about the country and its life. It is remarkable by contrast that most of the poets, older and younger, reached maturity as writers without going overseas. Poetry sets its own limitations and offers its own focus.

The judges in the Prose Award have made awards to John Caselberg and Maurice Shadbolt for the stories which appear in this issue.

Six Poems from the Maori

new English versions by Roger Oppenheim and Allen Curnow[1]

1. RITUAL CHANT OF FIRE AND WATER

It was dipped, it was drawn,
the water, the water
by the man called Maui,
by the hero who hoodwinked
men and gods greatly,
by the man Maui linked
by his lineage with the gods:
he dipped for his drink
the waters of the world,
he dared, and it was done:
he levelled the sandhills.

The fire spirit flew
into the stones and the trees
caught it in their clasp:
Toitapu and Manatu
were born, they began
searching for that spirit
for men to make use of:
let the hands tremble gently
for the fire appears!

Burn, fire, burn!
fetch forth the monster,
Matuku the man-eater!
He comes, he is captured,
he is tied in the trap,
he is guarded now!

All this happened long ago
in the islands of Whiti and Tonga.

[1] These versions from the Maori, with the accompanying notes, are part of a volume edited by me which is to be published later in the year. The knowledge of Maori requisite for the first English drafts was entirely Mr Oppenheim's. The versions in their final form are the product of close collaboration, in which I had the last say in matters of form and prosody, and Mr Oppenheim on questions of fidelity to the sense of the originals. A.C.

2. AN ANCIENT FLUTE SONG

O shining-cuckoo, cuckoo
with a long tail, calling
down to me your news
of the spring, come close!

The wind slams and pierces
loosed from Maunganui
where Ripiro lies under
Let rituals be forgotten.

Let rituals be forgotten.
Rain on, O rain
tangled over the broad earth,
loom of the last darkness.

Come, cormorant at Te Taheke,
fly out of the wind-sleep inward,
make your nest here in the quiet
skies of the mind.

3. CHANT BEFORE BATTLE

Let fog fill the skies
let the cloud cover them,
the wind howls high up
to the world away down,
listen! the wind howls
from far away down!

Shuddering the spear
is charging, is flying,
the twin-bladed shark,
and the footsteps hurtling
O furious the footsteps
blood-wet the footsteps
bound for the world's brink!

He goes, god of battles,
the stars in his stride
and the moon in his stride—
run, run from the death-blow!

4. REPLY TO A MARRIAGE PROPOSAL

Don't hand me over with a word, Toihau,
don't give me to Te Keepa!
Isn't it enough that people are talking
as far as the quicksands of Karewa?
I am a stranded canoe broken in the big surf,
I am getting old, love play is past for me,
it will not be long before I dig my grave.

That is my path as it was yours, Paoa,
my ancestral path across Te Whakaurunga,
unbroken view of the burning island
Whaari, the demon's flames.
Here on the mainland, Hinehore's lover—
She can forget her jealousy!
She shall have her husband,
I embrace him only for a while.

The lips are made to taste with
but the body is firmly held.

5. TIPARE O NIU

a mother mourns her son

I will drench with my tears
the tracks that you travelled
going up by Tipare o Niu:

If only the south wind could carry me
coldly to the island of Kaiawa
too far, too far for me to go!

Through shadows, through showers of tears
poured out in pain all the long night
I have seen the borderland,
I have not seen
even dimly where the dead
rest by the trees, beside the water.

6. LAMENT FOR TE HUHU

Lightning splits the sky
above the burial hill:
what can this mean but death?

> My brother's shadow is gone,
> my friend's, forgotten so soon,
> the weapon plucked from your hand.
> O priests
> what was the night he died?
> Tangaroamua, the waning moon.

You have crossed Raukawa hill
slipped woman-wise towards the setting sun, the seas
of the west go weeping under.
Whareana was the way you went
where the hills run south unbroken.

> Push open the doors of the sky,
> go up to the first heaven,
> go up to the second: once there,
> if it is asked, Who are you? say,
> it is the ornament of the world
> who calmed all battles.

It is tiresome to me, the talk
of other men, other peoples:
the tribes are widowed, the world trembles.
We are the posts that stand upright
lonely where you left us,
our tide at its lowest, only
these tears to moisten your skin.

> The white mists hang heavy
> about famous Heke's head—
> disperse them, let them die!
> lest the evil that is best forgotten
> murmur in the memory.

SIX POEMS FROM THE MAORI: THE KINDS AND THE SOURCES

Much of the English in the best previous versions from the Maori can only appear pedantic or florid to a modern reader. It would be vanity to offer these few new ones (in their limiting context) in any spirit of rivalry with Maori scholars like Richard Taylor, Ngata, S. Percy Smith, Hare Hongi (H. M. Stowell) and their successors. But such translation as we have from them has been made primarily for readers possessing some background knowledge of Maori life and tradition—or in volumes or periodicals where that background has been provided. Besides this, the translators have mostly been handicapped by their notions of a suitably 'poetical' English idiom. Verse mannerisms of a debased Romantic sort, clichés and 'literary' diction mar the best of their Englished pieces. Ngata's versions in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* (in various suplements, 1944, '45, '48 and '49), for instance, are often prettified or expurgated in the text, while a perfectly good 'plain reading' is to be found in his notes. This is not to deny that his, and some other versions, possess occasional charm and some accent of authenticity.

In our own versions we have allowed ourselves a very few omissions (see notes below) and departures from a literal reading or line-order, where it seemed that these would remove obscurities for the general reader. Annotations might otherwise have had to be elaborate, or inconclusive, and could not make good a loss of poetic force.

Maori poetry was composed in numerous 'kinds'. We have translated examples of the *waiata* (songs), the *tangi* (laments), the *karakia* ('ritual chant') and a *reo tao* (chant giving power to a spear).

The sources are:

Ritual Chant of Fire and Water (He Waiata Karakia). Collected by H. M. Stowell (1859-1944). Song 253 in vol. 3 of *Nga Moteatea*, supplement to *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. 58, no. 2, 1949. No author given but noted as a Taranaki chant.

Tipare o Niu. Song no. 2 in *Nga Moteatea* suppl., *J.P.S.*, vol. 53, no. 2 (with Ngata's English version). Probable date, 1810-30. A lament for Te Matauru, paramount chief of the Ngati Porou tribe (East Coast), sung by his mother when he was carried prisoner to Waiapu. (An allusion to Tarawhata's dog has been dropped from the text, as irrelevant for a European reader.)

Lament for Te Huhu (He Tangi mo Te Huhu). Song no. 3, *Nga*

Moteatea suppl., *J.P.S.*, vol. 58, no. 2, with English version. Text supplied by Wiremu Rikihana, a descendant of the author, Papahia of Te Rarawa. Papahia was a chief of the Rarawa tribe and younger brother of Te Huhu; he was a signatory of the Treaty of Waitangi (1840). As a contemporary of Hongi Hika, who visited England in 1821, the author was probably born about the end of the eighteenth century.

Chant Before Battle. A *reo tao*. Maori text from S. Percy Smith, *Maori Wars of the Nineteenth Century* (Whitcombe and Tombs, 1910). Smith gives it as a 'Ngati Whatua tribe (North Auckland) version'. No author named.

Answer to a Marriage Proposal (He Waiata Whakautu). Song no. 4, *Nga Moteatea* suppl., *J.P.S.*, vol. 53, no. 2. Composed by Irihapeti Rangi te Apakura, a high-born woman of a sub-tribe of Ngati Porou. She lived during the mid-nineteenth century. Te Keepa was Toihau's son; the proposal was carried by an intermediary.

An Ancient Flute Song. Printed (1) in *J.P.S.*, vol. 27, 1919, and (2) in *Polynesian Literature*, ed. J. C. Andersen (Thomas Avery, New Plymouth, 1946). Collected by H. M. Stowell: no author, but assigned to Ngapuhi tribe (North Auckland). ['It was possible for the Maori to breathe the words of his songs into the short flute (*koauau*) . . . A good flute-singer was highly esteemed.'—Andersen.]

The *waiata* were sung to tunes, perhaps composed by the author or taken from older songs. Some 'classical' waiata are still sung at gatherings. None of the melodies have been written down; but tape recordings have been made by the anthropology department at Auckland University College, and some gramophone discs by the Department of Maori Affairs, Wellington.

The *tangi* usually commemorated the death of some important person, and were probably composed extempore at the *tangi* (or 'wake') ceremony.

The name *karakia* is today used for church prayers, but there is no analogy between these and the ancient *karakia*, better described as 'ritual chants'.

JOHN CASELBERG

Eli Eli Lama Sabachthani

And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth . . . and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. Genesis.

I

THE DARK, the howl and roaring ice-blast of the ocean of air savaging northward ceased as Orion emerged in a blue-cold sky, the full moon rode clear, and its cold white light dropped on the immobile plain, shadowed black and brilliant white on the snow sastrugi that furrowed, rippled, and stretched into shimmering horizons—and reached beyond the horizons, magically, silvering on the mirage-imaged peaks of the mountains; as slowly wreathing, and glimmering in the moonlight, wisps of vapour rose from the illumined plain, like gossamer hung and shone and swirled in front of the mountains and lifted higher; as out of the void of the sky, approaching the glacier-ice and the snow that were entombing the land, new moist air flooding downwards swooped nearer and nearer until its moisture shook at the start of the cold, hardened, coalesced about a minute growing centre, and changed to a crystal of ice drifted suddenly in a mist of a million other invisible ice crystals, which rose on an eddying of the upper air, then fell towards the land.

The moon yellowed, a stain of salmon light crept over the mountains, a rose flush deepening to crimson-red and scarlet and to foaming scarlet and gold stole up in the north, a feather of cloud that was arching in the southern sky grew lambent with twisted bands of frail blue and violet and orange and yellow and—fading at its outermost edge into the paler sky—pale opalescence, an earth shadow like a ray of darkness streamed out of the sky and, later, the sun rose, lipped over the snow, poured its track into the snow, returned blazing and dripping and shone into the mist of ice-crystals: where one crystal reflected iridescence from its several

faces as absorbing more water-vapour in the warmed atmosphere it intricately grew, and turned, spun, sparkled and fell; where in giant confusions of colour and light the sun itself was suddenly enswathed and mirrored by sapphire, emerald, gold and ruby and molten white light, which spread in outer and inner haloes framing the sun, in two wide apparent almucantari circling the celestial sphere above the horizon and near its zenith, in the fog bow curving up out of the sun and over and down to the horizon-circle and to the two mock suns—and in the streamers of lines, bands, circles and bows that irradiated the interstices of the sky and from which, like thistledown, a feathery six-pointed snow-star revolving slowly dropped towards the plain until it landed shivering, settled on the snow and gleamed.

Vapour molecules dancing up from the smaller snow-grains underneath impinged on, entered, and began widening the arms of the star.

But the wind came again, in a sharp gust, which rolled the snow-star forward. It rose to a gale, and lifted the star in a cloud of whirling snow-flakes; then plunged eddying down, dropping the star so that it formed with the surrounding flakes a heaped-up ripple of snow; and bit into the windward sides of the myriad ripples, snatching their grains and the star again up and depositing them on the leeward sides, moving the incipient sastrugi across the plain as each particle of snow began its millenary journey northward, towards the sea, and towards the sun.

In the consequent calm, the sun's rays sparkled on the elongated wind-carved sastrugus where the snow-star lay embedded. Under the crust forming on its surface, water-vapour molecules moved up and out of dwindling crystals into the larger crystals and into the star, which grew slowly, changing its shape, first to a heavier grain and then to a prism of snow; and which slowly sank, as air was extruded between the crystals, and the sastrugus, itself shrinking, hardened, and the sun again set.

Before the moon rose, in the glittering cold, more snow fell, soundlessly, burying the sastrugi under soft new drifts, adding its increment to the thin layer of metamorphosing snow and to the vast underlying winding-sheets of ice.

The prismatic crystal changed then, with the other nearby crystals, into an hexagonal-shaped grain of névé-snow and, as the cinctured continent swung, diurnally, freezing, under the glowing night sky and the sun; under the racing upper westerly winds and the slower descended air masses that formed blizzards, flowing west of north, depositing snow—as spring progressed towards summer,

more snow piled over the névé until it lay in a wave of new-fallen snow, separated by several miles from the nearest of the other waves that were spread, undulating, across the surface of the plateau like a mammoth white ocean swell.

The days waxed and waned; the bloodshot sun dipped lower in the sky and again disappeared, plunging the plateau into one more winter's night; the thousands-of-miles-immense plateau itself crept on; and smothered in névé, the molecules of the grain again shook as it was clutched up by the surface of the ice reaching up like a hand from an unfathomable gloom.

Weight and cold together obliterated its crystal structure. It grew still larger, enclosing the formerly-bounding pear-shaped bubbles of air, turning grey, turning to ice, interlocking with similarly-new neighbour ice-grains and sinking deeper, growing rounder and whiter as an even filial globe swung on its revolutions, replacing year by year. The grain was carried imperceptibly forward and down by the accumulatively-thrusting ocean of ice, adding its own infinitesimal but not insignificant presence and weight to the tide; which in slow-motion poured periphery-wards, above the once-forested, once-denuded, once-sculptured buried-alive mountain ranges and valleys and plains, moving steadily through the centuries then slowing, checked by the reformed sedimentary or metamorphic massifs that lifted themselves now in front of the tide, unsubmerged, extant.

The tide seamed and split itself into great rivers rolling into the mountains.

The ice-grain lay in a river that moved impassively, like a frozen lake, past a dark granitic shoulder. It felt the shuddering ahead of pressure ridges piling in front of a swamped nunatak. Later, molecules came dancing up from the ice underneath it as layers of overhead ice sheered forward and the surface split in a thousand crevasses and the grain itself slid above the rock obstruction. It was swung to the edge of the glacier, growing elongated and larger and more rugged and more angular; and was thrust inexorably rising up the flank of a mountain in a wave of ice like a flung sea-breaker congealed in a mid-splash, where protesting, groaning, screeching, twisted and sundering from neighbour grains on the raw side of a crevasse to a swirl of sunlight and air it was suddenly exposed.

The sun melted on the lips of the crevasse; convection currents of air blew past its walls; a flurry of snowflakes began festooning the sheer upper walls and covering the grain of ice; and the crevasse further opened, narrowly above but wider below, where

shaken snow-crystals and falling water tinkled and dripped on to the jagged blue ice-pinnacles reaching towards the light.

In the afternoons when the sun dipped behind the cliffs and the plateau-wind swept down the glacier, the tense, hardened glacier-surface adjusting itself to the change rang with fusillades of reports as the ice snapped, rupturing; and each sunlit morning, more ice overhead melted and more water trickled down the sides of the crevasse, and a small stream ran closer and closer to the grain.

Water flowed suddenly over the snow-crystals and touched the grain then and the grain went again out from itself, dissolving, expelling its air, joining with the other re-crystallizing grains in forcing the air into narrow tube-bubbles, re-freezing, and with the surrounding grains propagating its new structure of air-free bright-blue ice outward from the crevasse's walls.

Muttering, creaking, and occasionally roaring the glacier flowed on, scouring the rock floors and the mountains containing it; riding over obstructions and humping in transverse pressure ridges; sliding down steeper slopes where it broke in crevasses or ice-falls; heaping up through constrictions of its channel in longitudinal ridges then widening or slipping sideways and gaping in longitudinal shear-cracks; burying old cracks and crevasses and converting their blue-ice into dykes; closing with snow- and ice-rubble the crevasse where the blue-ice grain had formed and tilting it under its surface —wind-swept always clear of snow, continually descending, swinging ever nearer the sea.

Approaching the sea, the glacier accumulated snow-drifts from the frequent blizzards raging there and swept on, impelled by the smooth, rounded, sun- and wind-indifferent continental ice-dome inland, breaking through sculptured foothills and leaving the land, smashing into flat shelf ice.

The huge white shelf lay solid and resistant, fed by dozens of glaciers, guarding the land-ice from the attacks of the sea, pushing the ever-ravenous waves back a hundred miles from the coast.

Embedded in its blue dyke the grain felt the shock of impacts ahead. Again and again, like earthquake-tremors, the shuddering continued and grew stronger and louder and closer as the glacier ploughed into the shelf.

The thud, crash, split, tumble and roar of ice breaking in ice grew more immediate as the years passed and the blue grain approached the catastrophic juncture. The ice around it lifted then slowly buckling higher and still higher up and up into the sky as if volcanically erupting and paused where the cannonading itself sounded from, poised in a titanic pillar among dozens of such

carven blocks and pillars above the one-thousand-foot wide, three-and-a-half-thousand foot deep bergschrund below; into which at last it inevitably thundered; the bottom of which was gashed with crevasses; from which it emerged into the crumpled region of serrated, splintered, glittering, chasm-riven, awful and faery, peak-and-precipice ice-statuary that subsided gradually through a maze of lessening crevasses, haycocks, ridges and rolls into the calmer ice of the shelf.

The reverberations receded and the grain moved more equably in the hitherto-unknown hush of ice riding outwards over the sea. But again the silence was broken, each spring and summer, by distant murmurings, which grew more insistent every year.

All one winter the grain lay less than a mile from the great white cliffs that relentlessly pushed into and strained the fast-ice selvage, cracking the frozen sea.

Spring came after weeks of ablative blizzards had opened the cracks into lanes, during a night of blizzard, when clouds of snow streaming out from the mountains high over the shelf blanketed all light from the stars and the moon; when the clouds like thunder pealing descended engulfing the shelf; when the hurricane of wind foaming with invisible snow chiselled old drifts from the shelf and scooping flung all its snow old and fresh whirling horizontally across the sea; when the fast-ice finally buckled and rode out to sea broken loose from the cliffs; and when as the insensate furious clouds lifted and a half-daylight filtered through on to the ice, the water girdling the cliffs blackened under the lash of the gale, whitened farther off to foam, and rushing northward in pillars of sea-smoke and spray disappeared.

The wind later subsided. Out of crimson and purple clouds the sun emerged blazing on the face of the cliffs, reflected in the emerald water that swung past the dripping white promontories and through the turquoise- and azure-lit caverns of the shelf, and under the shelf, in a whispering, deep, unseen tide.

The sun again reddened, bled down to the rim of the sea and set, pushing a tall golden shaft perpendicularly up from the horizon.

The crimson stain in the sky and on the sea and the ice faded. The gold shaft withdrew. The sky changed to a more intense, to a deeper and darker, blue. Small stars appeared, winking palely; then multiplied, turning to a million steel fires overhead. The thin white moon gleamed over the shelf, etched its track on the sea, sparkled in the myriad frazil-crystals freezing where the fast-ice had been, and shone, silver and cold, on the cliffs standing out of the sea.

A rose-petal ray flicked upwards replaced by pale evanescence in the eastern sky. Trembling impermanently, two stamens of light rippled chasing each other up to the zenith. The west flickered suddenly alight with falling bright blossoms that hung, rose, fell further and again lifted and danced shot through with violet and saffron and cobalt-blue flashes; that quivered and waned and rushed and rushed over the sky; that fled, as white searchlight shafts stabbing overhead flashed, forked, curled in lilac and red spirals and will-o-the-wisp probing and flitting faded out into space between the light of the stars; that reappeared in delicately-flecked curtains shivering above the gold and green arch rising out of the east, and above the southern corona, which spread—vast, burning-amber and blue and green stained, fierily-tailed, and scarlet flame-lipped—unrolling, weaving, flowing and flooding up finally through a riot of streamers to where all the now-turbulent curtains and arches and coronas and streamers and shafts and glows met and wheeled, swayed and leaped, clashed and whirled their rainbow- and jewel-intense firmamental lights and were gone.

In the morning the sun again burned on the ice. Small white floes drifted through the water under the cliffs.

The grain felt a quiver run through the shelf as miles of seaward ice creaked, groaned, and settled on the falling tide: as the sinking continued, and the groan changed accumulating to a bass menacing booming roar, and the grain itself embedded in the ice behind the cliffs and the cliffs too slid accelerating in a one-million-ton fracturing island of ice, which lunged fountaining spray and dived under the waves, rose ponderously dripping shedding streams of sea-water and masses of ice and again sank, and again and again rose and sank pushing further out from the shelf growing smaller and bluer scattering its fragments over the sea. It felt each detonation of ice ripped from ice rasping nearer and nearer as the rising, swaying, pitching and falling lessened and the berg rode at last quietly, wonderfully blue, in a vast white wastage of floes, and overhead a shuddering began then screeched tearing open the blue dyke where it lay sun-dazzled and exposed on the side of the berg; where it felt the berg again shake, tilt and tip plummeting seawards, and the hot salt hurtling-up ocean's splash that dissolved.

II

It moved on the slow, dropping current towards the ever-cold, ever-gloom.

Falling from the stars, lifting from the land, creeping over and under the sea, autumn had come: had started frazil crystals growing on the surface overhead, where they calmed the murmurs of the sea, enlarged to plates, thickened from below, and cemented together, entrapping pools of brine; where the water in the pools slowly froze, until the salt itself hardened to specks of cryohydrate, and water-vapour from the air breathing over the sea descended and settled on the specks in intricate exact traceries of ice-frond and ice-petal and ice-leaf: had penetrated underwater, outwards from the ice-foot, over gravel and stones to the groves of kelp, sheathing the stones and festooning the forests of the kelp with ice: and had reached and increased the salt weight of all the water that was flowing westwards, under the new sea-ice; that passed the ice-cliffs of the shoreline, pushed south and west into the recesses of the vast deep bay, and was swung by terrene revolutions and the shape of the sea-bed and the land—and by the cold—northward, eastward, and down. Daylight had disclosed a field of ice-flowers shining in the sky of the frozen surface, waxen as white water-lilies, sparkling with silver, red, and green and blue flashes when the sun rose; had whitened the mamillated rigid branches of kelp, which floated in the water and stretched up the flowers; and had shone in the swirl of water, where multiplying crystals amassed on one plant strained up too far, amputating tore the kelp from its holdfast, swept the stiff stems and strands and tendrils swooping upwards, and scattered a stem fragment ripped from its matrix spinning, lifting vortically, sinking through other arms of kelp to the stones, and drifting out on the tide.

It floated past white and green sponges. Pearl-flecked brittle-stars appeared and disappeared on the gravel below.

It entered a garden of crimson anemones and purple sea-lilies, where red shrimps hovered and long-legged sea-spiders crept and peered.

Beyond, under a looming black boulder, it was brushed by the tongues of transparent sea-squirts. A colourless fish darted past. The lids of a large bright eye suddenly widened, pink blushes stippled a rotund body moving nearby and, trailing its tentacles, a startled octopus turned grey and knotted and pebbly and jerked down under the rock.

The water grew murky. Grinding white wastes of pack-ice sounded then overhead.

The autumn days shortened as, passing fields of coloured coelenterates and countless browsing and preying creatures, it drifted

under the ice down the continent's shelf; swirling occasionally on upwellings above dark gullies and canyons, but dropping always deeper again, borne steadily towards the abyss.

At the last the sun gleamed through a mist of frost-smoke on to the pool in the pack above where it sank from blue-green space into immense, brilliant, translucent blueness; above blue incandescence; above where the blue became blue-black and purple, and bacteria fluoresced inside the fragment; above where the fragment itself glimmered and fell into darkness, and the drowned water also lipped, poured over the declivity, and fell on into the coldest bottom water of an ocean, of a world.

A pale green crescent swung through the darkness. A red glow rising to the light grew redder and brighter and exploded in showers of gold spitting sparks. The long barbel of the angler fish writhed, flicked upwards, and the baiting light and the prawn both disappeared.

The falling fragment broke into pieces. Bacteria fed dissociating in its cells and cell-walls as the chemistry of its substance dissolved among the similarly-constituted salts of the sea.

Liberated ammonia molecules dropped further, past transparent worms with rose-tinted feelers waving like petals; through clouds of single-celled, shell-encased, olive-green plants.

In a fine rain of animal and plant skeletons one molecule dropped to the ocean floor.

Lilac lights, chased by shadows, fell from an over-hanging sea-plume and flitted across the ooze of dead diatoms where the molecule lay. Yellow, green, brown, and silver bacteria tingled in the mud underneath it. A sea-cucumber crept close, with hungry tentacles stirring and stuffing the grey mud into its gleaming, red, white-bellied body.

The current lifted the molecule out of the light, and the stab of bacteria transmuting started again. Changed to nitrite, it slithered on, flowing northward across the floor of that chasm-riven basin.

It traversed a pasture of yellow sea-pens, glowing and rippling like corn in the breeze of the current; flashing phosphorescent when orange, red, or blue butterfly-hued flat-worms brushed on their stems, or alighted, or flapped noiselessly past; bursting into trails and occasional dazzling avenues of light where rat-tailed fishes darted after their prey.

The long winter months passed.

It paused again, on a tendril-like arm, under the cliffs of a towering sea-mount. Nearby, protruding from the mud, two

antennae gyrated slowly. A pair of strong pincers appeared, followed by two golden bright eyes. With mincing steps a mantis shrimp emerged from its burrow. Through a colourless carapace its small heart was shaking, and its orange and blue underparts and azure-blue and gold tail quivered and shone. Carefully, the shrimp bent one leg under its body, over its back to its head; and with thin foot-bristles preened the antennae.

The molecule moved, on the yellow and black serpent-star's arm, wafted by cilia past sharp spines and small trembling gills; past tiny shellfish which were imprisoned in the jaws protecting the gills.

The arm twisted and the molecule rose, above the shrimp and the star, above the twinkling lights of animals growing on the face of the cliff, sidling north and east round the undersea mountain.

Skirting a precipice it came into the west-Atlantic ocean deeps.

A huge shape feeling to and fro sucked it down to the ooze. An intense blue glare shone over the ooze, illumining stiff sea-whips and the ghost-crabs scuttling sideways. It was swung up to the lights, under flat motionless fins and masses of blue-burning abdomen; drawn by the relaxing and contracting collared mantle of the squid closer and closer to the caverns inside its mantle where the leviathan breathed. The movements ceased. It flowed on, over a shining retina, across a cold blue dilated pupil; and was engulfed as the lights were extinguished by outpouring clouds. The great arms flapped and the mantle jarred shut and the nitrite rushed caught in the suction of the squid hurtling backwards, away from a goliath's attack: whose long body swelled and charged through the dark; whose flukes lashed the water and smashed a thousand pasture animals and thudded into the mud; whose tooth-serried jaws gaped, spun, lifted, savaged through the clouds and seized the gelatinous body; and whose vast oblong-like head was clutched by a hundred horn suckers, two of which slid, found, gripped, and wrenched at its eyes. With jaws full of squid and eyes torn hanging on their stalks the sperm whale fled into space. The dismembered squid sank through the gloom. Between two continents the nitrite swept slowly on.

With summer's waxing and waning it drifted up, over the long mid-ocean ridge, and down into the African basin beyond.

Lifted from the sea-floor it felt the warmth of a new current flowing overhead. It ceased travelling northward; was swung further east; and, at last, turned again to the south.

A shower of silver sea-snails streamed through the water nearby. Trembling and shimmering, translucent, flaxen and gold, a lace

network of tentacles, floats, streamers and bells throbbed up out of the depths. Arrow-worms and deep-sea minnows hovered and darted in the siphonophore's lights.

The nitrite drifted on into darkness.

Through months and years it moved on the current above the ocean bottoms, lipping, nosing, ascending, and diving, past the African cape, over the wide Indian rise, creeping continually eastward and returning, slowly, towards the ice.

In the Southern ocean, underneath towering cliffs, it dropped among the chalk sheaths of long-dead globerina. Naked sea-slugs crawled in the ooze. Bacteria quickly surrounded the molecule, stinging and oxidizing, changing its structure.

Overhead, the rocks lifted above the current that was heading back to the ice. They rose through the higher intermediate waters streaming northward, through the surface region of perennial turmoil, into the gales of the air; where they stood, for a few millennia, as the cliffs of an ephemeral island, facing the onslaughts of wind and the frequent lifted and flung dissolving sheets of seawater and the shudder and shock of the waves.

Altered to nitrate, the molecule drifted away from the base of the island.

A diadem of faint stars flickered ahead. Sky-blue and white and ruby-red lit, with ultramarine and mother-of-pearl fires for eyes, the Pleiades of the small mid-water squid flashed and vanished, leaving the darkness tinged with purple.

The days on the surface had lengthened as the sun rose higher. The water grew warmer. The current more quickly approached the ice and ascended.

The nitrate entered a blue world.

It surged in a mist of other molecules and minerals and salts up and up into the light, into the spring, into the dazzlement of the day.

Dark tongues of kelp swung to and fro, and blue and white masses of ice floated melting in the brilliant water.

The nitrate flooded past seals and penguins and transparent and pink fish and krill up to the yellow cloud of diatoms hanging over the sky; to the individual flaxen stars of the cloud; to a single, sun-reflecting, tiny, floating spring plant.

The diatom felt the touch of the nitrate, between its bright rays. A tremor shook in the silver and gold mosaic of its cell walls. A casement opened and the nitrate flowed in.

III

FLITTING blue-black and white, the breast-driven flippers beating the water drove him arrow-like from under the ice, snatching the krill, past small purple medusae, through the down-dropping shaft of sunlight that probed in the pool. A thin, whitish stream of consumed krill flowed from his beak as he twisted and doubled darting back away from a fish, and from the looming eyes of a seal.

In the water the melting warmth had released pale-yellow mists of diatoms from spores locked in the ice; and had brought, to feed and fatten on this harvest of plants, shoals of krill swimming south into the pack—one of which, a shrimp-like euphausid with shivering antennae and bright-red eyes, swam slowly as if crawling up through the pool. Under its transparent body, small rose-tipped swimmerets drew a current into the feathery filter on its anterior limbs; where the plants were screened from the water; where one scintillating nitrate-nourished diatom was wafted with other diatoms and trapped, snatched up by a pair of flat mandibles and transferred through the euphausid's mouth and throat to its stomach, which with its musculature pounded their filigree skeletons, exposing their substance.

He broke to the surface, stretched his neck and peered at the ice-flow ahead, dived opening and closing his bill consuming the euphausid, sped for thirty yards under the surface then, in mid-dash, jerked his tail back and up and his curved body up and shot propelled out of the water into the full blaze of the sun. He landed tobogganing along the ice on his chest, stood, shook his flippers and tail and his head, and gazed sideways with one eye at the group of other penguins staring over the far side of the floe. Beyond them the sun gleamed on a white prairie of floes, and shone on the mountainous berg grinding steadily closer; from which, invisible against its ice and its snow, snow petrels like white butterflies fluttering emerged and wheeled and dropped skimming across the lanes of vivid-blue unfrozen sea.

Joining the group and bending, craning forward, he felt the thud of a flipper on his back, regained his footing, sidled evading another blow and attempted in turn to push his neighbour into the sea; paused, with his head cocked, looking at the surge and fall of the swell; and saw a long, dark carnivore shape gliding below.

A penguin splashed from the floe and he also dived in, somersaulted underwater, and leapt back on to the ice.

For hours the young birds fed and played while the day lengthened and the floe itself, unnoticeably, moved on with the pack, swung north-east, away from the continent, by the relentless westerly drift.

Again the penguins stood in a row and one bird dived and he sprang, too, gracefully, with flippers held close to his sides then striking and whipping the water; which struck over his stiffened beak and throat and closed nares and over his watching brown eyes as he swam.

He heard the soft swirl and the rush behind him and fled then with chest bursting towards the cliffs of the berg and shot swiftly, turning; saw the near eye like flame and the bared white teeth and the huge sinuous grey and pale-striped body rippling, veering away; saw approaching and reached and flung himself out on to the yellow-stained shelf under the cliffs; and lying panting, staring back, saw the wake of foam where the sea-leopard charged, circlewise, in ever decreasing circles, slowed, broke from the water, shook its dark hunched shoulders savaging the black and white shape in its jaws, and spat a wastage of feathers over the surface and disappeared with its prey.

Diamonds dripped from the ice-stalactites overhead, and he felt the thud of the swell, driving into the heart of the berg.

Standing upright, he looked at the pale green and blue ice-shafts rising immensely out of the sea. He waddled over to the shelf, rounded a ledge, and peered through high fissured portals into the sea-carven complex of pillared and vaulted naves, transepts, spires, and latticed cloisters within; where azure mist glowed in the inmost recesses; where the water whispered and gurgled and, in the distance, hollowly boomed.

The sun sank lower and reddened, the floes shone lilac-edged, and a saffron glow spread over the sky.

A cold wind blew at his throat. He returned to the shelf and lay down, in the last rays of the sun, on his chest with his beak stretched out on the ice.

He stayed near the berg through the night, and the next day, and for many days—feeding, playing, and maturing—until the arrival of summer; when, on calm nights, the sun no longer set, but wheeled like blood all night in the sky; when the sea turned to gold, and the air and the floes were ignited with orange or crimson or bright copper fires, and the berg itself caught alight, purple shadowed, its crest molten.

As autumn approached he travelled deep into the pack, where the swell grew less and less restless and finally ceased; where he

came over the interminable floes and broken brash to a fleet of white bergs, some straight-walled, others eroded, castellated, with fantastic turrets and peaks standing into the sky; drifting, in the half-dark, like fiords afloat in a still, black, deserted sea.

In the bitterness of the winter's night he started his journey southward, re-crossing the now endlessly-frozen plains, alternately waddling upright then falling on his chest and tobogganing, resting his legs, rowing with his flippers at the same pace as before.

He came to where a berg had buckled the pack, and fed; then continued marching on over the ice under the stars and the southern lights and the moon.

During a blizzard of driving black snow other penguins appeared. He huddled near them, sheltering, waiting for the storm's abatement; after which he broke from the encrusting snow, dog-like shook his flippers and body and tail, and hobbled off, following the other birds in line; travelling on and on across the hummocky ice until, with the first red midday glow of the sun, the ice underneath him trembled, then rose, sank slowly, and rhythmically lifted again; until he felt that floating white continent's echoing to the pulse of the sea, and heard the murmur then the roar of the waves.

Stinging and warm the spray struck on his forehead, on his breast and his flanks, and he scurried forward and dived headfirst into the surging sea.

The other penguins splashed feeding around him. Later they all paused, banded together, and again headed south, wending among floating rafts and steeples of ice, where sea-leopards lurked and berg-like, yellow-stained, dark-blue whales cruised endlessly past or, flooding surfacewards, released their exhausted breath in bass bellows that thundered over the waves; where the sail-like fins of Orca, the killer-whales, patrolled to and fro.

In clear glinting sunlight he emerged through swirling white waves to a wall of ice and leaped for the last time from the sea.

Other penguins followed him out of the water. Ahead, hundreds of birds trailed over the fast-ice in a single-file column, which faded to a wavering dark line and disappeared at the horizon.

He fell into line, keeping pace with the groups of birds both before and behind him as they alternately walked and tobogganed, going up and over and down across the sastrugi, crossing the plain.

He did not stop to sleep. His head drooped, he gazed at the black pointed tail and carnelian feet of his neighbour bobbing in front, and his own sore feet plodded mechanically forward.

The ice turned red, the colours of evening spread overhead, and all night the marching continued.

The dawn showed two more columns of Adélie penguins, one on each side. He raised his head, peered with both eyes along his bill into the distance where the three columns converged, and his wheezy breath caught and he stumbled as the first rays of the sun touched a snow-covered peak. He saw, then, a range of glaciated domes and peaks, and the flanks of a greater mountain, which lifted and faded into the clouds; before which, rising over the rim of the ice, a dark rock wall emerged and grew steadily nearer and higher.

Again his neighbour fell forward and he flapped on to his chest tobogganing down a sastrugus and the wall of rock vanished. When he stood again the blood danced in his eyes. Through a red haze the skuas were wheeling.

Pale blue glaciers appeared hanging from the peaks over the sea-ice when he entered the shadow of that tall dark headland; when he passed a barrier of stranded bergs, their summits on fire, and saw the first black and white penguin-strewn splash of the rookery. His outstretched flippers waved then in unison with his twinkling legs as he scurried, in a crowd of feverishly running and panting penguins, across a crack in the ice, past the still-frozen boulders, up a worn track in the ice-foot, over yellow and red and brown sand-drifts and through a pool of slush to the black pebbled beach where he paused, gasping, dazed among the clamour of the one-hundred-thousand hissing, crying, quarrelling, mating or nesting birds.

The thwacking sounded in his ears of two cocks beside him leaned chest to chest raining blows over each other.

He went on, through the radial green petals of excreta surrounding the mounds where the hen birds squatted, with ruffled neck-feathers and blood-raw bills, pecking their neighbours; interrupting their quarrels to raise their stretched necks and hiss at him as he passed.

His pace slackened. He, too, ruffled his feathers; and the noise slowly died.

He jerked his eyes open then and continued on, avoiding a frozen lagoon, crossing the ridges of basaltic pebbles, occasionally pausing, stretching his neck and peering hopefully at the hens, edging through all the throng until he reached the avalanche slope at the southern end of the beach; where he halted, irresolutely, half falling asleep.

He started, looked up at the beetling cliffs, and pushing through a group of cocks began walking under the cliffs, traversing the length of the rookery. As he wended through the felt-work of

sitting birds a long muttering growl broke out ahead, reached a crescendo alongside and subsided behind him.

Among the northernmost nests, near where the beach swept up and vanished in the huge wall of the Cape, he turned and climbed, over sharp rocks, up a steep snow-slope, his partially-webbed feet clinging to and his long nails digging in the snow and later the ice as he ascended the heights.

After his toiling steeply up for an hour, above a precipice, under an overhanging cornice, he hopped, slipped, and with waving flippers recovered himself and again hopped, successfully, from an ice ledge on to the snow-splashed scree-slope where the hen bird was sitting.

Less painfully, lifting his shoulders, he marched up to the white-breasted dark shape of her body and buried his bill in the snow.

A thousand feet above the beach and the flat white lake of the sea, above the basalt that for generation after generation had faced the sea, buttressed the continent, and succoured his species' plasm in its cold stone ambit—in dumb show he lifted his head and placed an imaginary stone in front of her feet, saw the upraised bill and the dark flash of her eyes and heard the outraged raucous cackle mounting her throat; hunched his shoulders shutting his eyes as she leaned fiercely pecking his forehead and his neck and crying louder bit his white throat and grew suddenly quiet; rose softly higher and higher on his feet arching his neck and edging nearer and leaning himself now to her, over her still head, over her mild eyes, gutturally cooing, soothing her until she too jerked upright and, breast to breast, both their breasts and their necks swelled, lifted, reared perpendicularly and clonically throbbing rocking sideways uttered their cries.

He left her then and went over the scree, searching among the rubble of half-frozen silt and stones until he found a pebble, which he took in his bill, bearing it carefully back to where she watched and waited. He bowed, placed it at her feet for her to add to the nest, and again turned away; repeating the journey for hour after hour until darkness drew in, when he lay, at last, exhausted, alongside the enlarged nest, near her, with his chin stretched up on the stones. She touched his bill with her brick-red bill as a few snow-flakes flurried about them and he fell asleep.

They mated on the gale-torn heights of that headland, where, at first, every day, he fought hostile cocks, standing upright, as if enlarged, with his feathers ruffled angrily in front of each challenger, exchanging showers of blows until his feather-padded body was battered and breathless; until mire caked his chest and blood

streamed from his flippers as with both eyes blazing in an agony of desperation he drove the other cock backwards, and the overpowered, would-be-usurper fled.

As spring lengthened to summer the hens began laying; the rookery grew quieter, more orderly, and the fighting lessened then ceased.

He heard, in the night, her gurgling cries, which were repeated on a subsequent day, informing him she had laid and was lying on two chalky-white oval eggs. He saw her bill open and the swollen shape of her tongue protrude as she lay in the harsh bright sunlight gasping quietly. He turned, climbed over the scree to a shadowed, unmelted snowdrift, and seizing a mouthful of snow carried it back to the nest, reaching over her, offering and transferring the snow from his own to her eager mouth, quenching her thirst.

Dazzling far underneath him, reflecting its wide gold track in the open sea, the sun hurt his eyes as he left her and descended the cliffs to the beach, where he joined a group of similarly-bedraggled nearly-starving birds and hurried with them, past the thousands of nests, past the first fluffy-brown chicks—guarded already in crèches from the skuas screaming above them—, going around the lagoons and over and down the seaward boulders on to the ice.

They met and chattered noisily with a band of gay, glisteningly-clean, gorged birds, some of whom turned and accompanied them back to the edge of the ice; where they paused, watching the swell—in endless succession swinging the white floes, sweeping into the bay—lift, rush, and slap foaming under their feet. Then they ran to and fro chasing and pushing each other until, gripping his toes on the ice, with the sun gilding a curtain of spray again in his eyes, he leapt up and out, falling down the twelve-foot drop, flashing and plunging into the cool green liquid-encompassing sea. Behind him the other penguins anxiously waited, while, ahead, with their foreheads and eyes floating above the surface, somewhere the sea-leopards lurked: but he flew, rolled, dived, sprang into the air and, as the rest of the party dived concertedly in, splashed back and began pursuing fish and euphausids.

The wind burst on the headland and beat in his feathers when, two weeks later, approaching the she-bird, he swung his head sideways and upward, arching his neck and calling her with the soft guttural blandishments to which at first she did not respond but which, later, as he persisted, lifting her head, she answered raucously, with staccato cries, refusing to move. His feathers fluffed out and his flippers waved angrily and she cried in his face

with rage then rose, sank again, grew still and quiet, and stepped hesitantly from the nest. Hopping up immediately he replaced her, straddled the eggs, prodded the rearmost egg with his bill on to the web of his feet, and lowering himself carefully covered the other egg with his warm, white, feathered belly, feeling the pulse in his crutch and his breast against the shapes underneath him; commencing his turn of the long, incubatory vigil. She stayed beside him, murmuring anxiously; then, touching his bill, waddled off to bathe and feed.

After the first chick hatched, several times every day, he went down to the sea; from where, hobbling and leaning backwards, with a gross swollen stomach-ful of food which he would later regurgitate for the chick, he made the arduous ascent.

When she had grown, they brought the one fluffy large brown chick they had reared tumbling and sliding down to the water's edge. Unlike many others, the chick plunged eagerly after her mother into the pool; while he watched, then turned and trudged back over the ice alone.

The summer drew to a close.

A large red moon hung over the far-away snow-slopes and glaciers and green-serpentine bluffs of the western mountains and, above the dark mane of the headland, an orange stain in the sky mingled with the showers of gold preceding sunrise—when he stood, on the cliffs overlooking the beach, hearing the throbbing of his heart as loud as the waves' sound: when thousands upon thousands of penguins, in groups, in pairs, or alone, on the cliffs, on the beach, or on the ice, stood similarly silent, also listening, staring northward at the auroral flashes dancing over the sea. He went down the cliffs, joined a dozen other waiting birds on the ice-foot, left-turned in unison when one of their members ran out in front, and marched towards an identically approaching group until the two groups met, merged, turned together and stood motionless, watching and waiting. The sun rose, the ice sparkled, again and again the manoeuvre was repeated, and increasingly large massed parties wheeled, marched shuffling their feet like breaking glass, and merged, moving steadily out from the cliffs, in late afternoon reaching the sea's edge and amalgamating, at last, standing in tense, serried, coherent array facing the waves.

Next day the departure began. All day batches of penguins left the rookery, the shepherded chicks going first, followed by parties of adults. And all day, while he stayed on the beach waiting for the completion of his moult, an icy wind, winter's harbinger, blew down from the heights.

A week later tattered feathers like ribbons still hung from his breast and his sides. He moped in the hollows, dared not enter the water, and did not feed.

That night, in the darkness, an ominous moaning woke him, enlarged to a rumble, grew steadily louder and louder and roared and rang throughout the bay echoing from all the cliffs as swept by gales and currents from far out at sea the pack ice came shouting in to the shore.

The wind swirled about him. He crouched in the lee of a boulder. Snow spattering on the wind drifted behind the boulder, fell over his feet, clotted his tail, mounted his legs and belly and back, and slowly imprisoned his chest, his flippers, and his shoulders and shivering head.

By morning his bill was encased in ice.

The wind had dropped. Sunlight sparkled silver and iridescent in the crystals surrounding the opening above him, through which, down the slope of a snow drift, he saw several tall dark shapes approaching the place where he was buried. They halted. One detached itself from the others, coming closer, and he recognized an Emperor penguin, who waddled almost above him, stopped, bowed a shining ebony head, and twirling its beak through the air inspected him gravely. He saw the lemon-yellow breast gleaming like sunrise, the lilac line flashing on its lower bill, the golden splash on its neck and, as it turned to leave, the powdering of salt and ice crystals glittering like stars on its indigo shoulders. It went down the slope and rejoined the group, which turned, receded, grew smaller and smaller, and wavered a last time in the distance and vanished.

The sun, too, disappeared.

More snow fell.

IV

THE WIND changed, the singing of the ice over-riding in the sea-lanes hushed and ended, and his ventral white wing-bars flashed as lifting his wings and beak and swallowing the flesh he had torn from the sternum of the dead bird he cawed at the snow-petrels swooping over his head.

They had skimmed like wraiths into the hurricane wind, diving through the spindrift, flitting around and above him, when he had sped over the waves towards the shingle-fan where the she-bird

waited, under the cliffs, with wings upraised, sheltering the small, fluffy, slate-grey chick, and her beak twisted up, glaring behind and far above her at the overhanging cornice snapped off by the gale and, even then, plummeting seawards; when screaming and whirling faster and seeing her brown wings drop over the chick as she disappeared in an avalanche of ice and rocks and snow he had flung himself blinded into a cloud of debris; had flapped more desperately through the battering downdraft; and had at last emerged, bruised and gasping, to fly slowly up past snow-splashed boulders, past a frozen lake, past thaw-water streams trickling and tinkling beneath the vertical cliffs like bells; past the sea-, wind-, sun-, and ice-gouged white sandstones and grey shale beds and seams of coal and tall, blood-red pillars of laval dolerite which standing upright into the sky stockaded the continent from the ravaging summer sun and the sea: rising past the ice-blue gape where the cornice had broken, above the wide white mountain-sides of the coastline into the empyrean where he circled, screamed, circled again in the wind whirling air and turning away crying headed eastward.

He tore the mesenteries, shook then ate the frozen red intestines, rummaged among a mess of bones and icicle-ornamented flippers and feathers and skin, plucked the remaining soft parts from the dismembered penguin, and bunching the muscles of his breast and thighs sprang, with shuddering wings, up from the snow, fluttering above the whitened spit of the beach, above the bergs and the ice-choked bay gleaming fierily in the autumn sunlight, riding an updraft up the face of the cliffs; pursuing the large, winged shadow that fled before him up and up and over the white-flecked yellow, brown, red and black basalt and basaltic scoria and tuff of the Cape, until as it vanished he soared again out over the sea, which spread, congealed and rose-stained, stretching to a thin red track where the moon rose.

He swung south, into the wind, while the sun set, and the ice-slopes above him shone kaleidoscopically through swirling clouds, and silver and silver-blue and purple peaks appeared like lamps in the southern sky, then slowly faded, as he flew on and on, uninterruptedly, and into the night.

In the moon-glimmering air, above the stars reflected in the sea-ice, tilting his wings, he planed steeply down to alight and peer at a shivering film of ice on a pool nearby. He flinched, starting back, half raising his wings and his beak, as the ice burst and showers of phosphorescence flashed preceding and trickled in cold bright

flames from the dark, sleek, upward-swooping head of a seal; whose mottled fawn-brown throat panted and throbbed; whose startled eyes shone; and whose dilated black nostrils snorted, expelling and renewing its breath in the freezing air. After several minutes, as suddenly as it had arrived, the Weddell seal turned, dived, and disappeared; leaving a trail of luminous clouds, which sank slowly, frothing, into the depths of the pool.

Before morning he rose, with his ponderous flapping wing-beats, and again flew south, keeping within sight of the moonlit massifs of the coast that lifted above and stemmed the inland ice-sheet; at daylight passing an ice-capped island, fringed by perpendicular black rock walls with fans of avalanche-ice spread-eagled at their feet; watching, among a bewilderment of lesser domes and ridges standing over the horizon where the coast had retreated in a long indentation westward, two white cones recede while, further south, a solitary ice-spire lifted higher and higher, and a water-sky shadow approached, and the chequer-board of pancake floes underneath seamed gradually open, invaded by lanes and leads of calm, blue, shining sea.

Again he descended, crossing a floe inhabited by seals basking in the sunlight, passing above the floe's edge and above a channel into which, simultaneously, gliding from under the ice, the huge black head and shoulders and torpedo-like elongated abdominal and caudal flanks and tail and motionless flukes of a blue-whale swept, to skirt the edge of the ice, and lift its head and open paired spiracles at the surface, ejecting an oily hot geyser of breath steaming and roaring about him. The blue-whale curved, plunged its head under and raised the mid-line of its back and its small black dorsal fin out of the water and sailed on, spouting twice more at intervals as it swam directly below him; then arched its great back high and submerged and flexed the muscled sweeping flukes threshing downwards, propelling its one-hundred-ton rippling rushing foam-streaming yellow-diatom-stained blue-black length and breadth out of the ocean, skywards, towards him, into the air from where hanging poised it smashed back smothered in an explosion of spray and sounded, plunging somewhere far under the floes.

So he never again glimpsed its leviathan body, as he soared on, for hour after hour, throughout the day and for several nights and days, riding into the winds that made his journeying possible; that brought him, one purple dawn, to within sight of an immense ice-clad mountain, standing sentinel between the sea and the sky; from whose pale white summit black pennants of smoke streamed billowing northward.

He turned east, past a smaller volcano, sweeping below crater-rims licked with gold and lilac glaciers and snowfields and beetling, furrowed, yellow-brown cave-ridden bluffs hanging over the sea; nearing the horizon-long plain of ice which fronted the booming waves in tall cliffs and which—grinding, creeping and floating outwards for thousands of square miles from the continent's edge—buckled in giant bergschrunds and seracs where it collided with, and was anchored at one corner by, the volcanic complex of the island.

After his swooping high over the ice-cliffs and gliding down and on, the plain stretched before him, as wrinkled as the ocean, as unchanging and endless as a grey desert of sand; so that he half-closed his eyes, and even welcomed the shapes of the darker clouds that lifted over the rim of the desert, and rose, and gathered, and rushed swelling towards him, and shrieked suddenly pummelling his body with snow, forcing him higher, seeking respite above the storm.

When the blizzard had passed, the ice-sheet lay again so featureless, silent and flat underneath him that it seemed as if he, too, were poised, unmoving, frozen in mid-flight. Its monotony was disturbed only when it disappeared in darkness; and when, after another day and night, magnified whirlpools showed that an influx of ice was ploughing in somewhere ahead, and tent-like foothills lifted over the horizon, and the first peaks peered momentarily through the clouds as the plain was replaced by a broad valley-mouth which he entered, without pause, flying upstream over a hushed white river of ice.

He passed a red rock pillar previously rounded and striated by ice and polished by glacier winds; rose imperceptibly over a line of coloured erratics then, more steeply, as the valley narrowed, over indigo crevasses and shearcracks where the river bulged from and was constricted by and heaved itself through canyon-like walls; flew under the precipices of russet and copper and bronze-yellow autumn-hued conglomerates interleaved with breccias and marble, which, spattered with snow on their ledges, dropped darkly from the dazzlingly-white hanging-glacier over his head; straightened his wings, gliding for miles between blue cliffs of ice towards the névé slopes swooping in wave after foaming white wave up to the sun and the sky; and arrived at and spiralled ascending in front of an ice-fall's vertical torrent of blocks and spires. He saw, alongside, then falling away below him, the steep grey nunatak of granite that reared from the glacier at its fountainhead and cut the lipping pouring deluge in two streams.

Beating his wings quickly, wheeling away over the nunatak, he swirled faster and higher through an aerial world of sunfilled sky and exposed olive and black gneissic faces and molten white ice-flanks and couloirs and arêtes and massive- and jagged- and razor-edged summits to the col where he landed, above the plateau; where he looked at the speckled lichen and thin, bleached, snow-petrel bones strewn over the col, half-lifted one wing, and, twisting his head, explored with his beak under its pinions.

Carefully, exactly, for a quarter of an hour, commencing at the base and working along the length of its vane, he nibbled and re-joined the barbules of a primary flight feather.

He paused in his preening, shook his wings, and in the motion of turning to another disarranged feather, with his beak lifting up, glanced into the vault of the sky as the sun's rays lit a speck of silver far above the plateau, fingered an invisible high mist of vapour and crystals, and fashioned the opal, saffron, and damask sash which stole shining over the peaks.

Concolorously then (from the flash of a union whose flame would erupt, out of one violet-pink spark, into fireballs of greenstone flung as if instantly zenithwards, flashing and heaving in coronally vivid and vast bloodshot and livid and orange tumescence, glaring on the faces of the far-away mountains, boiling and ballooning, pursued, impaled, pierced and dwarfed utterly by an ordurous pillar fountaining into the stratosphere filling space with its clouds: whose nova-like heat, roar, and blast would vapourize not one or a million but astronomically numbered ice grains from off the plateau, and, stunning him, shatter his ears, and dislodge rock and ice avalanches throughout hundreds of miles of the peripheral mountain ranges, and in furious combined blizzard snatch up his body flinging it far down the glacier on to the plain: whose showers of flocculent mauve-green and mauve-grey ash falling on him would inject their particles past his few, scorched, remaining feathers into his tissues, where they would propagate red encrustations around his nares and eyes, pustules under his eyes, ulcers in his mouth, and raw ulcers and tumours erupting all over his skin; where they would start dissolutions in his blood that would let blood, weeping, from his skin and into the muscles above his bone-joints and into his stomach and bowels; and where, reaching his small, pale, paired internal testes, penetrating the mother germ cells, entering their infinitesimally-minute nuclei and traversing, twisting, and snapping the thread-like heredity-fibres, they would touch, and stab, the units of the fibres, the complexly-molecular genes, the templetes of all of his species' and of his and of his

possible progeny's aliveness and birdness and skua's shape, strength, grace, rapacity and pride so that, had he ever again risen from the ice and flown, soaring, disporting, travelling northward over the ice and the sea to winter in the pack; had he returned, in the spring, among a crowd of screaming skuas, to the rookery on the headland, where his viable compulsive hostility towards all other seabirds would have temporarily waned and an increasing appetence driven him, with erected hackles and flashing wings, to circle an hovering she-bird, and follow then lead her zooming above the rookery, and circle again gliding wing-tip to wing-tip with her, watching her strong black curved beak and bright brown eyes cleaving the air and her dark crown and gold-splashed nape and straw-yellow dappled throat and buff breast and white-barred, wide, floating and lifting wings wheeling beside him; had all separateness been finally overcome, later, on the ground, after he had left her and dived, wildly, tumbling, zigzagging in a flurry of outstretched feathers and feet just as at sea he would suddenly dash, spin, dart, turn, rush and seize a shearwater or a petrel, which he would either rob of its food, or which, dropping with it on to the sea, entrenching his talons, he would claim as his prey—had he mated, ever again, he would beget, not life, nor even death, but either immediately, or in subsequent generations, a monstrous, malformed, unnatural brood, an half-alive, half-dead, perhaps eyeless, or wingless, or multi-limbed thing that was branded, irremediably, by the drifting ash; which would drop, not on his battered carcase alone, but over the plateau and the mountains and the plain, to be swirled away by the gales, and buried under snow, and borne by glaciers preserving its communicable poison to the edge of the land, and by ice-shelves and ice-bergs to the inhabited edge of the sea), in a white flash, as the transmuting of atoms sundering and igniting began and fired, fused and contracted was accomplished, the sun fell on or leapt from under him and melted his eyes; so they poured fro... their sockets, dripped from his beak, ran over the rock and ice of the col, and seeped into the snow.

HEAD OF FIGURE IN THE PORCH

Meeting-house at Ruatahuna

PHOTOGRAPHS BY HESTER CARSTEN

THE MEETING-HOUSE

HEAD ABOVE THE PORCH

HEAD ON THE CEILING INSIDE

BASIL DOWLING

Oakleigh

THE birthplace that I never knew
Till I returned, a raw schoolboy,
Was itself born in me and grew,
An image of desire and joy.
Great stretching grassy acres brown
And bare, but not too bare for sheep;
Cocksfoot, thistle and thistledown;
Wire fences tufted with old wool
Where sheep had struggled to escape
And made the sprung wires creak and ring;
An island in a river-bed,
Thickets of gorse or native thorn,
And shingle channels dry or full
Of milky water flowing deep
From far-off mountains, glacier-fed:
Tall pines and gum trees bent and torn
By great nor'-westers' buffeting,
And in the aromatic shade
A magpie's harsh call overhead,
Or sheepdog's bark again and again
And rattling of a kennel chain.
Beyond, half hidden by the trees,
The old white house, wistaria
About the windows, and the sun
Peeling the paint from rail and sill;
And in a wainscot the wild bees
With their unending gentle drone
And faint pervasive honey smell.
But this I picture most of all
Because affection lingers there:
Beside the stable in the yard
My father, dressed in country tweed,
Tightening the girth a hole to ride
The boundaries on his sturdy mare.

JAMES K. BAXTER

The Return

Came to the rock, asking forgiveness,
To humpbacked roads and the piddling schoolhouse
Where children hammered asphalt into holes.
Venus with her thunder slept
On tired dunes, in grey maternal
Macrocarpa branches. Rigid Mars,
Demon of the middle earth, leprous
Chewer of continents, was a boy tumbling
In a ditch with a bloody nose.
Came, how late and strange, to childhood's rock
Sealed against the comer,
Where once was unequivocal peace and pain.
Nostalgia more precise than hope
Washed granules of bright quartz
From layered seastone, honoured
The foul river, oared by ducks, flowing
From inexhaustible springs. Came
To cold farms, banks of seaweed
Piled on the coast by a spring tide.

I have no skill to set down
The perils of a late journey
Made to get back a full sight of loss.
Many miles from here my youth died
In northern warrens, stifled by invisible
Cloths of delirium and habitual greed.
But here the stars that shine between our bones
Shine as if at the entrance to the maze
From which none walk alive, on mushroom rings
Darker green than the sheep-nibbled grass,
On foam-belts of the southern shore, houses
Where some still trim the wick,
At evening, of a kerosene lamp, and watch
For sons and fathers drowned on the drumming bar.
Delivered from a false season
To the natural winter of the heart
One may set foot with the full weight of man
On shell and stone and seabird's skeleton.

MAURICE SHADBOLT

Play the Fife Lowly

1

SHE RAN, her legs jerking steadily forward, her feet striking cold echoes through the moonlit streets. Quick swallows of air rasped in her throat and stung her lungs; her coat slapped back and forward, as though trying to impede her progress. She still called his name. Once she thought she heard an answer; once a distant voice in faint, haunting song.

But there were only deserted corners where the wind sidled among rustling papers, and empty streets leading to more empty streets: and these lined with the same decayed shops and secretive houses, sullen and shadowed, which waited for the first light of morning to strike through the gloom.

She paused and, in the moment the echo of her own footsteps died, she heard the other feet ringing behind her. She began to run again, faster now.

2

HELEN was afraid of following feet. She did not consider it, even now, as an altogether unreasonable fear, like a small child's cringing horror of the dark. She had known it since the night when, tired of seeing the other girls in the flat rustle prettily away with their sleek boy friends, she decided to forsake her usual Saturday evening by the fireside, and walk by herself.

It had been pleasant at first: her heels clipping over the gleaming pavements, carrying her through the rain-cooled darkness, past the mingled spears of blue and red quivering on the night sea. And there was the shabby wharfside milkbar where, from a rainbow juke-box, a thin masculine voice wheedled for the return of lost love. Sipping her milk-skinned coffee, she watched the Saturday-night drifters: sad, shuffling old men; middle-aged women with dusty furs and shapeless hats; sallow young men with tragic faces, pin-stripe suits and nicotine-yellowed fingers. She felt an affinity with them: she was like them, she told herself, one of the strays

of an unfriendly city. The idea, new and vivid, came warmly to chasten her loneliness. Only afterwards, walking home again past the shimmer of water, was the mood broken: a figure lurched out of shadow, a bottle smashed, and a slurred voice called. She began to run: unsteady feet hammered behind her. Once she fell, shredding her stockings and scratching her knees. But she was on her feet quickly, running again, not stopping until she slammed the door of the flat and leaned limply against it, listening, waiting for the footsteps that never quite came.

Sometimes, waking from a dream of smothering, she thought she heard the feet again: it was almost as if the quick, ringing footfalls were always there, somewhere just behind her, always ready to burst into earshot. She remembered them more calmly at other times: on the Saturday nights, in the first numb moments in the suddenly-quiet flat, when the truth of her own solitariness came swiftly to her. Then she would put down her book, silence the radio, hesitantly approach the mirror, remove her glasses, and tell herself: I am twenty-five, not pretty, and will never be married.

But those were Saturday nights before Gerald. Not that she could regard Gerald as more than a casual friend, a Saturday friend. He was pleasant, courteous, mild, but hard to take seriously. And when she realized finally that for some unaccountable reason she had aroused his deeper interest—now that the first strain of friendship had relaxed, and they could laugh more easily with each other—she was not sure what she should feel: she was aware only of a curious mingling of pleasure and regret. Pleasure, she supposed, firstly: that was only natural. Then regret, foreseeing already the time of his eventual turning away from her polite rebuff.

But she was no longer sure, now, that she could still face the nights in the flat alone; the nights when not even books or music could seduce the truth.

Tonight, in the restaurant, as Gerald leaned intimately across the table, fingering his engraved cigarette case and exhaling smoke smoothly, she decided there was no real reason why she should not, after all, marry him. As she half-listened to his murmured confidences, she avoided his clear, expressionless eyes and, turning her head slightly, studied his reflection in the dazzled wall-mirror: he was even handsome, she supposed, in his clean boyish way; she had never considered his attractiveness a great deal. In his neat suit, starched shirt and college tie, he always seemed so much younger than herself, though they were the same age. She glanced

at her own reflection only briefly, meeting the weak eyes that were too far apart, seeing with a renewed distaste the cramped, plain features, the dowdy straight black hair cropped short from desperation, and the modest neckline of her new yellow frock. By all the rules she should be too glad to marry Gerald. Unless, perhaps, there was somewhere a forgotten provision for love; a clause inserted by some romantic who would also have pictured courtship as wild, stormy, and utterly novelettish while conjuring up elaborate images of fevered caresses and crumpled frocks; who would never have seen it as this, so quiet and tepid that it had been difficult for her to recognize it as courtship. But, after all, Gerald could be likeable enough: she would have to be content with that.

And then, leaving the restaurant, he spoilt her mood of acceptance: he spoke curtly to the girl behind the cash-register about a noisy drunk the girl had allowed to enter the place. He was needlessly unpleasant, and it brought back all that she had tried to forget: his ridiculously pompous mannerisms, his lifeless and self-opinionated monologues about himself, his friends and his prospects, when she could only listen in silence, trying in panic to find something to link them through shared conversation. She would fail even to build that necessary illusion; and see the lie as absurd and futile.

She recognized his mood as they drove to the party: he sat stiffly silent behind the wheel, his impassive face flickered by light; and she knew he would be examining a new approach, calculating her response. She was almost certainly in for another serious talk: in his delightfully subtle fashion he had even prepared the way, at dinner, by telling her about his new promotion at the office.

The street into which the car turned was broad and prosperous, with large white homes set back among ordered tangles of dark greenery. Streetlamps, obscured by trees, sprinkled winking lights over the car-bonnet.

Gerald slid the car to rest: silenced the engine.

'Well,' he said, speaking for the first time in minutes. 'Here we are.' He paused, fumbling through his pockets for cigarettes: she waited, tightening her coat about her neck, stiffening slowly.

'You know . . .' he began, inserting a cigarette in his mouth.

'Yes?'

'It ought to be quite fun tonight,' he added lamely. His fingers fidgeted with his lighter: the sudden flare lit his tense face forcing a smile.

'Any particular reason?' She felt calmer: he surely wouldn't attempt to say anything now; his moment had escaped him.

'A bit of a joke, really,' he said, tilting back his head to exhale smoke loudly. 'But Tom Anderson's been invited.'

'Tom Anderson?'

'You must have heard us talk about him'

'Was he the one—'

'—the one that went all arty after college. Everyone knew he'd turn out a flop. He did, all right. Hit the booze and got T.B. and God knows what else. I hadn't heard anything about him for years. Mike met him accidentally in the street. Thought it might be a bit of fun inviting him along tonight. But I don't know whether it's such a good idea.'

'Wasn't he your particular friend?' Helen said, feeling her way back through the memory of grey conversations; to the rare places, here and there, where her interest had been lit.

'Just a friend,' he corrected quickly. 'That was all.' His tone dismissing the subject, he settled back in the seat; self-consciously he slid his arm around her. He seemed about to make another attempt to talk seriously.

'Tell me more,' she said evasively.

'About what?'

'About this Tom Anderson—and what he's like.'

'He's not really all that interesting.' He paused, drawing her towards him. 'You're much more interesting.' His hand felt clumsily at her face, tilting it upwards. 'Helen,' he began.

'But you still haven't told me—' she protested.

'I wish I hadn't mentioned him,' he said petulantly, jerking back into his part of the seat. He shot open his door. 'Come on. Let's go inside.'

A beam broadening across his lumpy face, a glass wedged in a huge fist, Mike met them at the door and led them inside. Guests were beginning to swarm through the large comfortable rooms; momentarily garish under the sharp lights, they grouped and regrouped, manufacturing brittle conversation. Almost all the boys, like Mike, were friends of Gerald's from college days; to Helen they all seemed to possess the same clean features, meticulous grooming and tricks of speech, as if they had all been designed to the same neutral pattern: she sometimes had difficulty in remembering names, telling them apart. Only Mike was distinctive: heavy and

shapeless, lumbering and loud-voiced, but always the leader, the one who had held them together since college.

At the bar, as Mike poured drinks, she looked about, foreseeing the nature of the evening ahead. First, growing tipsy but not yet drunken, they would conjure names and events from the past to cover lapses in conversation: 'I say, did you hear about Hamish?' 'They tell me Robin . . . .' 'You remember that time?' 'I always laugh when I think back . . . .' Later, as alcohol took greater effect, they would return from rumour and reverie to the present; to back-slapping, name-calling, boasting and rowdy frolic which would be pursued with vast seriousness, as though they desperately wanted, now that the first novelty of adult life had worn thin, to escape from themselves and recapture the lost variety and vitality of their schooldays. The girls present—the limpid girl friends and affectionate fiancées—would appear mildly shocked at first: it was almost necessary that they show some measure of disapproval, as if this only made the ritual more wholly delightful. But later, naturally, they would join with the boys in feverish dancing, stamping conga-lines, and suggestive games. And at the end, the antic scrambles subsiding, there would be illness and upsets, tears and flushing toilets, and frantic pettings on the verandah, in the bedrooms, and in car back-seats.

In another room a radiogram pulsed a dance-beat: through a doorway Helen could see several couples scraping listlessly around the floor.

'Well,' Mike said, handing out their drinks. 'Anderson hasn't arrived yet.'

Gerald frowned. 'I'm rather hoping he doesn't.'

'Why?' Mike demanded, regarding Gerald shrewdly. 'Don't you want to see your old cobber?'

'It's not that,' Gerald said quickly, beginning to stammer. 'I mean—well, it's just that . . . .'

'What?' Mike said, cocking his head to one side. 'Just that what?'

Helen, puzzled, saw faint colour show in Gerald's face. 'Anderson's—well, all right,' he continued to stammer. 'But, I mean—inviting him here . . . .' He faltered, surrendered to the sudden silence, and, lowering his eyes, began to sip his beer.

Mike laughed hoarsely. 'Gerry,' he said, 'you know something? You're getting stuffy in your old age.' He slapped Gerald roughly on the back. 'And you want to know something else? I should've thought you'd only be too glad to see your old friend Tom. You're the chief reason I asked him along tonight. That's a fact.'

Helen felt annoyed: they were talking round the subject, shar-

ing some secret, leaving her out of it: Mike seemed determined only to hint, and Gerald to remain reticent.

'What's so terrible about this chap anyway?' she demanded.

'Ask Gerry,' Mike said with a malicious grin. 'He was Gerry's friend.'

'For God's sake,' Gerald said sharply. 'Can't we just forget about him?'

The situation was suddenly uncomfortable, disturbing: Mike's head was still cocked slyly and Gerald's eyes were downcast. And it all seemed so ridiculous: Helen was relieved to see Sylvia, Mike's fiancée, swaying towards them. Sylvia always had a certain awkward serenity, even when she had been drinking heavily; tall and cool in blue, her blonde hair frothed around her fine browned features, she came to stand before them on unsteady feet, smiling warmly at Helen. Helen had always liked Sylvia: she was the only one of the girls at the party to whom she could talk for long.

'I bet I don't need three guesses to know what you're talking about,' she declared tipsily; her large glass of iced gin slopped and chinked in her hand. 'My God, Helen, did you ever see anything like it? You know something? I think this chap's only a rumour.'

'You're only a rumour,' Mike said with heavy sarcasm. 'And a pretty vague one at that.'

Sylvia frowned dully, seeming to take a while to see his meaning. 'Don't you talk to me like that,' she snapped finally.

Mike shrugged and deliberately turned his shoulder towards Sylvia. 'By the way, Gerry,' he said, 'did you hear about Tony?'

Sylvia touched Helen's arm. 'Let's get out of here,' she said. 'It smells rotten.'

Helen glanced at Mike: but he didn't seem to have heard the remark.

She followed Sylvia from the room. Near the door they passed a group in loud conversation.

'I always said Anderson—'

'—I simply loathe these talented people, don't you?'

'My God,' Sylvia said as they moved down a quiet passage to the rear of the house. 'You wouldn't read about it. Talk about animals picking on one with a broken leg.'

'Are you and Mike having troubles?' Helen asked quietly, as Sylvia led her into a bedroom.

'Troubles?' Sylvia crowed. 'Give the girl the prize for the understatement of the year.'

Standing before the mirror Sylvia plucked out hairpins, and

began to brush and pat her hair into shape. Presently she turned to look at Helen, her eyes sharp, her voice sibilant.

'Look, sweet, you're pretty broadminded. You want to know what my big trouble really is?'

'If you want to tell me.'

'When Mike finally got me to bed it hurt his feelings when he found out I already knew the routine. His poor pride, you know. Thought he was going to be the conquering hero. Now he's busy finding excuses not to get married. Funny, isn't it?'

Sylvia jabbed the hairpins back into her hair. 'I think it's absolutely hilarious,' she went on. 'Because the funniest thing is I don't even want to marry the randy clot anyhow. Stupid, isn't it?'

Helen didn't answer.

'Well—isn't it?' Sylvia demanded.

'I'm sorry it's gone wrong,' Helen said.

'Gone wrong?' Sylvia laughed without mirth. 'If I had any sense left I'd get out while the going was good. That's really the stupid part. But there comes a time when it's now or never. For me it's now—or else. I can't afford to get a reputation. And I ask you—who'd give me one quicker than sweet little Michael with his damn loud voice?' Sylvia turned from the mirror. 'Well, what about your trouble? How's dear Gerry? Still getting frightfully serious?'

'Yes. Still serious.'

'A stayer, isn't he? When d'you think he'll get sick of it?'

'I haven't the faintest idea.'

'Don't tell me you're weakening.'

Helen shrugged. 'Hadn't we better go back?'

'In a moment,' Sylvia said, clicking open her purse. 'Just a daub of warpaint.' She inclined towards the mirror, half-stooping and peering intently at her reflection as she worked a lipstick over her upper lip. 'Funny,' she murmured, 'but I had an idea he'd get you sooner or later.'

'What do you mean?' Helen said.

'What I say,' Sylvia said primly: satisfied now, she replaced the lipstick and clipped shut the purse. 'Anyway, just how ridiculous can we get? I ask you.'

'What's ridiculous?'

'Everything.' Sylvia threw her arms wide. 'Everything in the whole damn wide world. Here's me fighting like hell to get married when I don't want to get married. And there's you fighting like hell not to get married when you really want to get married. If that's not ridiculous, then I don't know what it is.'

Sylvia glanced finally into the mirror; she pinched and smoothed her frock down her slender figure. 'Do I look all right now? My God—my knees still feel weak. You know what time I started drinking today? Eleven o'clock. Had to—to face up to him tonight. They ought to feel weak, shouldn't they?'

Helen didn't answer; she was listening to a dull explosion of voices from the front of the house.

'What's that?' said Sylvia, bewildered. Then, elated, she added: 'Don't tell me. This character must've actually arrived. We'd better have a look. Before they start picking him to death.'

As they moved to the door, she caught at Helen's elbow. 'Look, before I forget. Perhaps I was shooting off my mouth too much just now. But you won't say anything to anyone, will you?'

'Of course not.'

Sylvia squeezed Helen's hand gratefully. 'I didn't really think you would. It's just that I'm in a big enough mess now without—' She halted, frowning. 'Do you ever feel all kind of cramped up and suffocated? Well, that's what I feel like now. All cramped up and—' She paused again. 'What's the use? I don't know.'

She jerked Helen towards the door. 'Come on. Let's have a look. It's all free.'

The commotion had shifted from the front door to one of the rooms; it had begun to subside. When they pushed into the room they found attention centred on a strangely various group. There were four islanders, two boys and their girl friends, young and bewildered in the alien atmosphere. The boys wore gaudy-flowered inner-and-outer shirts and had guitars strung round their necks; the girls were slim and neat in flounced, warm-coloured skirts and pastel blouses, and they stood close to the boys, as if for protection from hostile stares. With them was a delicate youth with thin feminine features; he wore a yellow turtle sweater, and curls of fair hair tufted from beneath a black beret. He was surveying the room with apparent unconcern. If he had been the only other one with the islanders, Helen would have mistaken him for Tom Anderson: he seemed the fragile male she had pictured. She hadn't expected the tall dishevelled figure which dominated the odd group: red hair flared above a squarishly attractive face set on jutting broad shoulders; the whole figure had an immense solidity about it, challenging as it stood now, the feet planted firmly. Clothes did not mould to it: they clung limply and fell away; the unbuttoned front of his tartan shirt peeled from the chest to reveal

crinkled red hairs on milky flesh; his soiled corduroys were hitched askew, and a flap of the shirt hung out; bare feet were sandalled loosely.

Speaking loudly, ignoring Mike, he hustled his friends into seats. Then he slapped Mike on the shoulder.

'Give us drink,' he commanded. 'Then we give music.'

Mike stared foolishly, seeming not to know whether to be hostile or obedient: he paused indecisively, then went to the bar. 'What d'you all want?' he said from the silence, summoning a coolness into his voice.

'What is there?' Tom Anderson said.

'Well, there's gin and scotch and—'

'It doesn't matter. Make it beer all round.'

Small noises at last began to ease away the silence: the chatter of bottles on glasses, the rustle of frocks, the click and flare of lighters, small wisps of conversation.

Helen became aware of Gerald standing beside her. 'Serves Mike right,' he said. 'He should've known there'd be trouble.'

'What trouble?' Helen said. 'There's no trouble.'

'No trouble?' Gerald laughed shortly. 'You're a bit innocent, aren't you?'

Sylvia, who had been listening, turned on Gerald. 'What did you expect him to do? Come creeping in on hands and knees? Or did you want him to stand up against a wall so you could throw darts at him?'

'I was talking to Helen—if you don't mind,' Gerald said stiffly.

'All right,' Sylvia said. 'Don't get shirty.'

Helen moved away.

'What d'you think you're doing now?' Gerald demanded, lunging after her. He was curiously flushed and panicky.

'I thought I might help Mike with their drinks. Somebody could be polite, after all.'

Their exchange of words had suddenly become an incident: people stared: and from the other side of the room, she realized with cold shock, Tom Anderson regarded them with amusement. She broke free of Gerald and went to the bar.

'Can I help?' she asked Mike.

He raised blank eyes, sweat beading thickly over his upper lip. 'Oh—yes, thanks,' he said. 'Thanks. What a mess this is. What would you do?'

She didn't answer: it was the only time she had seen Mike discomforted at one of his own parties, and for some reason she was beginning to enjoy it.

Gathering up the filled glasses on a tray, she moved slowly across the room. Tom Anderson stood before his friends protectively; he intercepted her.

'Thank you, ma'm,' he said with mock grace, as he received the tray. 'Damn kind of you.' His eyes, lit with a strange mixture of insolence and friendliness, remained keen and compelling on her face.

'And who do you belong to?' he said. 'Gerry?'

'To no one,' she said swiftly, turning away; and her ticking heels carried her burning face back across the room.

Gerald was in an intense conversation with Mike at the bar. He ignored her, but she overheard him say, 'After all, it's only a matter of squeezing them out, isn't it?' Near them, a large group talked in an animated staccato: 'What a hide though—' 'Those tar-babies and that chap in the sweater—if you ask me . . . .'

'Well,' said Sylvia, coming to stand beside Helen. 'There's only one thing for it. Get tight and watch the fun. Like a gin?'

Unabsorbed, isolated, they sat in an alcove, a recessed window seat; the islanders occupied the seat, the fair, delicate young man was arranged languidly on the floor, and Tom Anderson squatted on his haunches, flourishing an emptying glass as he conducted the islanders in singing. The fair young man sang fitfully, when he knew the words, but most of his time he spent gazing round the room with liquid, shallow eyes. Around them the party continued in a weak attempt to heal over the wound: voices were raised, glasses chinked, people eddied back and forward, brief silhouettes against the raddled colour of the group in the alcove. It could almost be considered a normal party now, Helen thought: almost, except that only the newcomers seemed to be enjoying it. There was just a grave determination to continue and to not acknowledge; and the guitars and pleasant island voices, circling bright and contrary through the room, made the scene absurd.

'What's wrong with your boy friend?' Sylvia said. 'He's like a cat on hot bricks.' Helen looked towards the bar: Gerald was still talking earnestly to Mike.

Someone carried the radiogram in from another room in an effort to drown the singing. Then, just as music began to thunder from it, the fair young man, who had apparently developed a dislike for an elegant girl sitting near him, said something insulting to her. As if they had been waiting for that particular moment. Gerald and Mike sprang across the room to where the fiancé of the

elegant girl now stood threateningly above the fair young man. Trying to pacify them, Tom Anderson moved into the centre of the argument: the radiogram roared on unchecked, smothering the clamour of voices: the six of them, the five boys and the girl, postured and grimaced like dumb characters in an intricate tableau.

'It's getting really good,' Sylvia said, teetering on excited feet.

By the time the volume of the radiogram was lowered, Tom Anderson had managed to calm the trouble. The sudden gathering dispersed, with warnings and meaningful gestures.

'Pity,' Sylvia murmured, with a click of the tongue. 'I was just starting to enjoy it.'

With a new rush of music, several couples began to spin around the floor. The group seated in the alcove did not attempt to sing again. After persuading the islanders to join in the dancing, Tom Anderson spoke to the fair young man, who had sulkily taken a place in a shadowed corner of the window-seat. But the only response was a violent headshake. Then, ignoring the young man, he took up a guitar and began to idle his fingers over the strings while looking out over the room. He saw Helen: he winked broadly, grinning, as if they shared some secret, and raised his glass to her: she jerked her eyes away.

'Well,' Sylvia said drily. 'Don't tell me you've made a hit.'

Gerald came towards Helen. 'Dance?' he said, almost apologetically. She slipped into the crook of his arm and let him slide her away.

Over Gerald's shoulder she watched Mike approach Sylvia and say something. Sylvia hesitated, bracing herself: then she hissed a reply. Mike backed away as though stung.

'I'm terribly sorry things have gone wrong,' Gerald was saying. 'Everything's gone wrong tonight.'

She could, she supposed, have replied that she was enjoying the evening; but the sarcasm, even if it were not lost on him, would have been pointless and cruel.

'Let's try and make up for it,' he went on, as though he had learned the phrase by heart from a book or film: spoken in his unbending way, it sounded faintly ridiculous.

Sylvia's blue frock flashed towards the alcove: Helen's view was obscured for a moment, and then she saw Sylvia dancing with Tom Anderson.

Gerald stiffened. 'Do you see that?' he said.

'What?'

'Sylvia.'

'I know,' she said calmly.

'The sooner Mike wakes up to her the better. I've been trying to make him see.'

'See what?'

'See she'll only mess him up.'

'What's wrong with Sylvia?'

'Ask yourself. Look at her tonight. Drinking like a fish.'

'Have you ever thought Mike might be the reason why?'

'Look here,' he said sharply. 'Mike's my friend. I'd like you to remember that.'

'Then I wish you'd remember Sylvia's my friend,' Helen said in a small, even voice.

'Please yourself.'

There was a pause.

'And there's just one thing I'd like you to tell me,' she said.

'What's that?'

'Why do you hate Tom Anderson so much?'

'Who said I hated him?'

'In that case you're putting up a wonderful act.'

'Look,' he said with irritation. 'Can't we just quietly forget about him? He'll be gone soon, anyhow.'

'Why?'

'Because we just got him to promise to clear himself and his menagerie out of here soon—that's why.'

Helen was silent. She was quite certain what she had to do, now. There was only the one question to ask.

'Dear old Gerry's girl friend, eh?' Tom said. They were dancing: they moved lightly, swiftly, through the turning colours: blues and greens, golds and crimsons, flickered confused patterns before her eyes. His voice was low in her ear. 'Friend, is it—or fiancée?'

'Friend.'

'Well, well. And when shall it be fiancée?'

'I don't know—that it will.'

'He's asked, I suppose.'

'Yes. He's asked.'

'Well,' he said with his friendly smile. 'Dear old Gerry.'

Close, his face quickly lost its crude strength: cheek-bones formed gaunt ridges in the thin white flesh, and in the eyes, retreated down dark sockets, there were webs of redness. He regarded her quizzically.

'Would you tell me something?' she said.

'Anything you like.'

'Why does he hate you so much?'

'Who?—Gerry?' he asked, with affected surprise. 'Does he hate me?'

'You've seen him tonight.'

'Well,' he said, with a slight lift of the eyebrows. 'I'd never have guessed.'

'You were good friends at school, weren't you?'

'Excellent friends.'

'Then why does he hate you now?'

'Perhaps,' he suggested, 'he's just forgotten—that we were friends.'

'He hasn't forgotten—you know that.'

'Well, then—I can't understand it. Can you?' He smiled again, as if the whole thing were charmingly inexplicable.

'But you do really understand.'

'Do I?'

'Tell me what you and he were like at college.'

'Well,' he said, pausing briefly. 'We used to recite rather badly written poetry to each other. In quite a pleasant place, as I remember it—down by the riverbank, where the willows made a kind of cave by the water. We used to go there in the lunch-hour often. A good place to read poetry, even if it was no good. That satisfy you?' He paused for breath: smoky air wheezed in his throat. 'Or perhaps there's something else you want to know?'

'And Mike?' she said.

'Ah, yes. There was Mike. The big bad philistine in the background. All rather a good setting for a melodrama, don't you think?' His breath wheezed again, and he added, 'You could say the first act was when I was expelled. Mike told on me, of course. Liquor on college premises—it wasn't at all the thing. Nor girls over the college wall.'

'Why did Mike tell on you?'

'Well, let's be fair, shall we, and say that perhaps he wasn't exactly a patron of the arts. Not a puritan, mind. Not Mike—I never did find out where he got his own liquor.'

'And what about Gerald?'

'Yes—alas, poor innocent Gerald. Betwixt and between.'

'And which act would this be?'

'The last,' he said glancing round the room. 'If tonight's any indication. How would you put the sub-title? After the passing of several long years . . . .'

He appeared, suddenly, to have dismissed the subject.

The dance was faster now. Walls jazzed fleetingly, faces

twitched in and out of focus, points of light blinked. He swept her around, not roughly as she had expected, but like a fragile thing. She was out of breath suddenly, leaning against him, his stubbled chin prickling her cheek: she could smell his sweating male warmth.

'Enough?' he said gently.

'Yes.'

'Let's have a drink then.' He steered her towards the alcove. 'You will drink with us, won't you?'

'Of course. Why not?'

'I'd hate to get you into trouble with Gerry.'

'It's too late for that.' She frowned, biting her lip, for the moment unsure of herself: Gerald had left the room some time before. But why should she worry, even if she had hurt him? she told herself. Would Gerald have been as concerned for her feelings?

But that was no answer: she knew that. There was no answer. Only her smile and Tom's laugh.

'You haven't met Derek yet,' Tom said as he led her into the alcove. 'Helen, Derek. Derek, Helen.'

The fair young man didn't rise from his seat; he raised cold eyes briefly, his face still pouting. 'How do you do?' he said in a light, disinterested voice.

'Derek plays the violin,' Tom said. 'He's really most enchanting when he plays the violin. Now Helen here is extremely interested in things, Derek. You should get on well with her. Interested in things like—ah, yes, poetry. Extremely interested in poetry. Isn't it pleasant to meet someone like that, Derek?'

Derek didn't look up.

'Excuse him, won't you?' Tom said, as though apologising for a child.

The cough came without preliminary: one second he was smiling at her; the next he was doubled up with the sudden violence of it. And then, as quickly recovered, he smiled again with unchanged assurance. 'We'll drink, shall we?' he said.

Serving himself, he fetched new drinks from the bar. 'And now,' he said, 'perhaps we could toast something. What do you suggest?'

'To—' She hesitated. 'To poetry. To badly written poetry.' Their glasses touched with a light sound.

'And to all the rest that never got written,' he added quietly, without emphasis.

She looked quickly at him, expecting to see in his eyes, perhaps, some wistful trick of light to betray his smile. If there was anything there, she was too late to see it; the eyes blinked, and the

lids came up on lustreless pupils, circled by the same red webs.

She realized, for the first time, that he was drunk, though his manner and speech did not show it. He tilted back his head to drink with a flourish, his neck-muscles rippling. It was a gesture of defiance.

'Tell me something,' he said, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. 'Do you think you'll really marry Gerry? Or shouldn't I ask?'

'You shouldn't ask,' she said lamely. The question made her remember Sylvia. She looked about: Sylvia too had vanished from the room: perhaps to be ill.

'Who are you looking for?' he said. 'Gerry?'

'Sylvia.'

'Sylvia? Ah, yes, Mike's fiancée. She danced very nicely.'

'I really think I should find her,' Helen said apologetically.

'It's all right—if you want to go,' he said, touching her arm lightly.

'How do you mean?'

'I mean it's all right if you want to go. You don't have to make an excuse.'

'But I'm not making an excuse. I'm just worried about—'

'In any case,' he observed, 'you'll notice everyone else seems to be leaving us.'

She realized the room was beginning to empty: the radiogram had just been disconnected and was being carried through to another room.

The islanders returned to the alcove; their brown skins were shining with sweat from the dancing. They were bewildered and tense.

'I think we better go now,' one of the boys said, showing white teeth.

'Not yet,' Tom said. 'Let's make some more music.'

'I think we better go,' the boy persisted.

'Really, Tom,' Derek appealed in his thin, affected voice. 'Don't you think all this has gone far enough?'

'Everyone sit down,' Tom commanded. 'We're just getting started.' He turned to Helen. 'Aren't we, Helen? You will stay, won't you?'

And his eyes, hinting again of a secret between them, seemed to add: after all, there is no real need to say anything; we understand each other, don't we, you and I?

'I'll stay,' she said faintly.

'Really, I think—' Derek began to protest.

'Shut up,' Tom said mildly.

He drew up a chair for Helen and sat himself on the arm; the islanders crowded back into the window seat, and Derek slipped unwillingly to the floor.

Everyone else had left the room now: then Gerald came to stand at the door.

'Helen,' he said quietly.

There was a silence. Sylvia wobbled through the door to stand behind Gerald.

'Helen,' he repeated.

Standing across the misted emptiness of the room, he appeared at a great distance; and there seemed no way to answer him.

She shook her head. He stared with disbelief, then turned away.

There was the sound of Sylvia's high, brittle laugh; Mike entered and Sylvia allowed herself to be led out of the room, still laughing. Mike slammed the door as they all left.

Tom touched her arm, lightly, gratefully; but she did not look at him. The guitars began to strum.

It was after midnight: out in the passage goodbyes were said as another group of guests departed.

From other rooms came the subdued sounds of the dying party: a drowsy twilight, settling over the rest of the house, had infected even those in the quarantined room, for weakening voices had fallen away to leave Tom Anderson to pluck sad, reflective notes from a borrowed guitar and sing alone.

The lights had long before been turned out. The moon chinked slanting silver through the curtains; pale, half-lit features emerged from the dark. They listened in silence: he had passed, now, from the robust and bawdy song; and his solitary voice, mellow and haunting, found the sentimental ballad.

When I walked out in the streets of Laredo
When I walked out in Laredo one day
I spied a young cowboy all wrapped in white linen
Wrapped in white linen as cold as the clay

For one moment it seemed the song would break off altogether: she felt his body beside her arch and quiver as his voice cracked and his fingers faltered discords. But the cough this time was suppressed quickly in his balled hankerchief. He paused for voice: from the silence she reached out a hand, awkward and hesitant. His fingers responded slightly to her touch before they shifted to the silent strings and discovered the tune again.

'I see by your outfit that you are a cowboy'
These words he did say as I boldly stepped by
'Come sit down beside me and hear my sad story
I'm shot in the breast and know I must—

Suddenly she was aware of something new and disquieting: moving her eyes she met Derek's steady stare; moonlight and thin shadow met over his face, intensifying the high-boned sharpness of his features. His eyes, small and faintly gleaming, continued to regard her with contempt and distaste: she looked away. Breathing deeply, she tried to check her trembling.

For a moment it had seemed she might cry out.

It was once in the saddle I used to go dashing

The door sprang open; an oblong of yellow light leapt across the floor. Mike entered the room and, peering uncertainly into the dark, sought her out.

First down to Rosie's and then to the cardhouse

Mike spoke quickly, slurring his words. 'Sylvia—she wants you. Says she won't talk to anyone else. I can't do anything with her. She's squiffy as hell. I can't—' He caught at her arm in dumb appeal. 'She won't talk to anyone but you. You might be able to do something with her.'

Get six tall cowboys to carry my coffin
Six purty maidens to sing—

She realized, as she rose and left with Mike, that she suddenly needed to escape the room, the eyes, the song, the singer. But, insistent and appealing, the voice followed them as they moved down the passage, their feet striking dull sounds from the carpet.

O beat the drum slowly and play the fife lowly
Play the dead march as they carry me along.

'You leave me,' she said to Mike over-loudly. 'I'll look after her.'

The voice, fading, pursued her still: it seemed, to her, to have acquired another dimension now, so that she glimpsed beneath the bright surface of defiance another, darker level.

When I walked out in the streets of Laredo—

She slammed the door. She leaned against it, her cheek pressed to the cold panel, until she was recovered: then she turned to face the bedroom.

Washed in a pale green light, the room had a heavy, enclosed smell; faint streamers of smoke lingered towards the ceiling, and on the table beside the bed stood a depleted bottle of gin and two large glasses, one overturned in its own puddle. The bed looked crumpled, slept-in: Sylvia's frock, a splash of blue on the sheen of the red bedcover, was twisted up towards her thighs to reveal

long slim legs and a transparent white underslip. She lay face down; one brown arm crooked out from the body, the hand clenching and unclenching a corner of the bedcover. Hair tented her face in a tangle of blonde.

'Get out,' she said, jerking convulsively. 'Get out you bastard.'

'It's only me,' Helen said quietly. She moved towards the bed.

Fingering back her hair, Sylvia raised her face: the skin was puffed and tired, the make-up smudged by tears; the lips, still a faint red, were like a thin scar, and the eyes were watering and bleak. 'I'm sorry,' she murmured. Her breath caught in her throat; she smiled, crookedly. 'I'm sorry,' she said again.

'Are you all right?' Helen said.

'I'm all right.' Sylvia tried to smile again. 'There's only one thing wrong with me. I've been starting to think too damn much.' She looked at Helen through drying eyes. 'Do you think sometimes?'

'Everyone thinks sometimes.'

'I mean thinking about things—about everything. About how you used to think there were all sorts of beautiful things in the world. And you find out it's only a dirty cheat, the things they put in music and poetry. Don't you ever think about that? Don't you?'

But she did not give Helen enough pause for reply.

'Well you're not educated then. You'll soon find out what a dirty cheat it is. There's no beautiful things. Just randy bastards and chemists' shops. You'll get educated.' A shudder rippled down Sylvia's body; then her glazed eyes danced over Helen's face. 'Where's your Gerry, anyhow? What've you done with him?'

'He's somewhere. I don't know.'

'Poor old Gerry. You know something? He doesn't know quite what to make of you. He thinks he might be in on a bit of a win if he had an intelligent wife. But you've only got him all mixed up. What he really wants is a dumb decorative blonde like me.' She stopped for a second. 'So you've been with them—with the others, all night?'

'Of course.'

Sylvia laughed. 'I knew you didn't understand.'

'What don't I understand?'

Sylvia's laugh rang again: it was edged with bitterness. 'Tom Anderson's not interested in you. He's only interested in spiting Gerry. Can't you see? He—' Her voice broke, and the laughter welled out in thin, hysterical crackles. Helen tried to force her back to the pillow. The hysteria subsiding, they fought wordlessly, from anger to despair. Presently Sylvia lay limp and silent. Helen,

still trembling, drew back from the bed.

'I'm sorry,' Sylvia murmured. 'It's not true what I said. I didn't mean to say it—I don't know . . . .'

Helen was listening suddenly: there were faint voices; a door banged; someone laughed.

She flung open the door and ran from the bedroom. Along the passage Gerald and Mike blocked her way.

'It's all right,' Gerald said. 'They've gone. We got rid of them.'

'Where did they go?' she said.

'They've gone,' Gerald repeated. 'Gone.'

'Sylvia,' Mike said, as Sylvia came stumbling along the passage. 'You should've stayed—'

'What do you think you're doing?' Gerald said to Helen.

'Can't you see?' she said. 'I'm putting on my coat.'

'You're not—my God, you little fool.'

He caught at her shoulders. She tried to break free, but he held tight, beginning to shake her. 'Can't you see—can't you . . . .' The words bubbled frantically in his throat; his face quivered. She couldn't be angry: no longer sure of himself or his own identity, he was bewildered, lost, pathetic, alone. She could only be sorry for him.

She almost wished she could have stayed so not to hurt him; but there was not even any question of choice now. Even if her flight or pursuit, whatever it was, in the end was only futile, then it was still something she had to do; a simple thing, like proving she was still herself.

Confused, struggling, the four of them were bunched in the narrow hallway. Sylvia's open palm smacked twice across Mike's face. Mike, recoiling, lurched heavily against Gerald, and Helen broke free at last: she escaped through the front door into a cool silent world laced with moonlight: trees, gardens, and then streets, pale, empty, and echoing.

3

SOMEWHERE, somehow, she must have taken a wrong turning. She was, suddenly, quite lost: the familiar part of the city was vanished behind her; ahead it was new and strange. Sagging and weed-tangled, rickety buildings conjured from nightmare lined her way: and the hollow eyes of unlighted windows.

She still ran: she ran until the feet ringing behind her found a voice and called her name. Then, fighting for breath, she leaned

against a wall and waited until Sylvia, slowing to a walk, came up beside her.

They stared at each other without words; their breathing sobbed. A loose shop-awning flapped regularly in the wind. Sylvia moved nearer.

'I only wanted you to understand,' she said. 'It was no good. That boy and—'

'But I knew,' Helen said.

'You knew? Then why—'

There was a pause.

Suddenly they were clinging together as though in fright. The wind grieved through overhead wires: it slapped and rustled nipping them with cold. Sylvia tried to speak.

'No—don't say anything,' Helen whispered gently. 'Don't say anything—anything at all.'

LILY H. TROWERN

Way

I SAT on this hill with Wiri
Fifty years ago when the rata flowers;
'When you go down in the cities
You must forget your whakapapa.'
His fingers brown and knotted
Caressed the silked wood of his stick.
All of us then were in the case
Of neither looking forward to the future
Nor back to the past.
We were in a state of not being,
Of existing only in suspension. So that
The trees we knew as children were no longer ours
Nor the tides nor the shores. Even the land
Was foreign to our feet as the land of a hundred miles off would be.
We lay in the night hearing the demons howl in the coast winds
And their sorrow was our sorrow.

We were not dead, yet none of us lived.
All about us were the desolate plantations.
Our gods had deserted us, and the crops grew no longer to a full harvest.
Rongo hid his face and went from us wailing,
Even a god dies without adoration.
But we learned in the fullness of time that as the crop is set
The harvest shall be; and the sun warmed and the moon set in her appointed stations
So that the land was once more home, and the trees ours,
And there were children again in the whare.
And all this would I tell Wiri had he not drowned,
The young tree needs a support to the wind or it will lean weakly.
Those of us who waited and did not go up to the headland
Will carry again the baskets for the kumara and the tuna.
But Wiri's son works on the pakeha road
And eats store bread.
Those who go down in the cities must forget their whakapapa.

Note. Whakapapa: genealogy; a sense of belonging; a knowledge of kinship.

M. K. JOSEPH

Distilled Water

FROM Blenheim's clocktower a cheerful bell bangs out
The hour, and time hangs humming in the wind.
Time and the honoured dead. What else? The odd
Remote and shabby peace of a provincial town.
Blenkinsopp's gun? The Wairau massacre?
Squabbles in a remote part of empire.
Some history here. Some history, but not much.

Consider now the nature of distilled
Water which has boiled and left behind

In the retort rewarding sediment
Of salts and toxins. Chemically pure of course
(No foreign bodies here) but to the taste
Tasteless and flat. Let it spill on the ground
Leach out its salts, accumulate its algae,
Be living: the savour's in impurity.
Is that what we are? Something that boiled away
In the steaming flask of nineteenth-century Europe?
Innocuous until now, or just beginning
To make its own impression on the tongue.

And through the Tory Channel naked hills
Gully and slip pass by, monotonously dramatic
Like bad blank verse, till one cries out for
Enjambment, equivalence, modulation,
The studied accent of the human voice,
Or the passage opening through the windy headlands
Where the snowed Kaikouras hang in the air like mirage
And the nation of gulls assembles on the waters
Of the salt sea that walks about the world.

RUTH DALLAS

Letter to a Chinese Poet

PO CHÜ-I, b.772 d.846

from The First Part: The Shells

Days, moons, go beyond, pass away
Futile to mourn, to grieve.

Old Chinese poem

I

CHUANG TZU, when his wife died
Shocked his friends by playing upon a drum.

You, when your brother had been dead a year,
Wrote him a letter full of family news.

In the eleven hundred years since your death
Has anyone, I wonder, written to you?

2

Not one of the ten pine-trees in your courtyard,
In whose fresh company you felt ashamed,
Sound and stillness lulling the air of spring,
Symbol of calm in the stir of the world's noise,
Not the tallest pine-tree, nor the youngest,
Shaped a cone that carried seed as far
As the box you made of cypress for your poems.

Seeds of a thousand autumns have drifted over
The terrace of sand, the waste and the green land;
And still within your poems the pines breathe,
Symbol for me as once they were for you,
Speaking in lands unrumoured when you were here.
Of the box you fashioned and knew so well
The inscription stands, preserving your doubtful sigh.

3

To learn the several thousand characters
So many years with a brush and a steady hand!
And in the streets the people endlessly passing,
Hurrying to see a procession, or just idling along.

Reading your poems translated into English
Is like conning
The names of roses in a catalogue;
Where are the words to convey what a rose is,
Or tell the transforming difference in shape or shade?
But once the rose has grown by the path at home,
Or is brought from the garden of a loved friend,
The name, a hint of the scent, and all is known,
From bud to final petal-fall.

Rosa chinensis,
Enriching roses in a foreign garden,
Fragrance in the air.

4

I walk among men with tall bones,
With shoes of leather, and pink faces;
I meet no man holding a begging bowl;
All have their dwelling places.

In my country
Every child is taught to read and write,
Every child has shoes and a warm coat,
Every child must eat his dinner,
No one must grow any thinner;
It is considered remarkable and not nice
To meet bed-bugs or lice.
Oh we live like the rich
With music at the touch of a switch,
Light in the middle of the night,
Water in the house as from a spring,
Hot, if you wish, or cold, anything
For the comfort of the flesh,
In my country. Fragment
Of new skin at the edge of the world's ulcer.

For the question
That troubled you as you watched the reapers
And a poor woman following,
Gleaning the ears on the ground,
Why should I have grain and this woman none?
No satisfactory answer has been found.

5

Easy, easy, sleeps the head
On a soft bed.
Not mine, the mutter
In a hard gutter.

Besides, they are so far,
These people, they are,
Really, what can one do?
They have such large families, too.

These thoughts are not nice
Either, if one spills rice,
Or burns bread,
Or is feeling over-fed.

Let us go to the races
At Easter—and other places.
Why should you bother?
Leave it to some other . . .

. . . indistinguishable.
Conversation in the bush.

6

I could show you mountains fair,
Rocks like men with frosted hair,
Forest-tops afloat in air,
Unguessed when you were here.

Then as now the trees were deep
In centuries of unguarded sleep;
The same torrents round them leap;
Mosses over their branches creep.

Sweet water rises from a stone,
Paths in a day are overgrown,
The lakes mirror a freshness known
To the first man who dwelt alone.

So temple-quiet are the long
Corridors he wandered among
The ear expects a bell, or gong;
Is startled by the bell of birdsong.

No monastery is built in air;
You would not find a pilgrim stair,
Hermit sage, or man of prayer,
But voices of the earth there.

7

I do not think you would like my appearance,
My fair European skin and large bones
Descended from Scottish, Swedish, English,
Adventure-loving ancestors,
Who crossed the world lightly;
Suppleness and strength
Fashioned for the sea and the sea shore,
And to withstand
Unutterable loss
Always in the wash of the waves.

For me the bone is a shell at the sea's edge,
Inhabited for a season,
Delicate conveyance, most wonderfully alive,
Empty house of the dead,
Sand and dust blown on the wind of time.
I cannot tell from sand or the wind's tone
If this man's skin was yellow, this man's brown;
But I hear over a thousand years
The heart singing in an old poem
Near as over the width of the earth
A clock in London strikes within one's room.

DENIS GLOVER

Cook's Journals

ALMOST to the end of the eighteenth century two imponderables faced the seaman—the determination of longitude, and scurvy. To them were added, in the Pacific, the geographic uncertainties. There was more legend than fact, and geography is a matter of facts. The discovery or rediscovery of land was at once the hope and the anxiety of the mariner; and the location of 'the wandering islands', legendary or real, was a problem first of faith then of

scientific search. They are more baldly marked on the charts of today as Position Doubtful, Existence Doubtful.

But amid island and reef, the rip, the current, the overfall, it was watch-on watch-off duty, driven by ambition, greed or the lash, that sent men in search of the fabulous land of Beach and/or the vast continent of the south. The idea died hard: Cook slew it with science on his second voyage. But the continent was a logical necessity to balance the northern hemisphere and prevent the world from toppling over, north being, in the grand scheme of the universe, naturally enough at the top. And it was gold that kept the world bottom-heavy. The first reason for early exploration of the Pacific (included in the mystique of the complicated Spanish soul, where conversion was, and was to remain, a useful compulsion to get the natives to work) was cupidity.

But eighteenth-century England saw things differently. It was, after all, the peak period of all things humanly possible. There was little to do but pursue speculation with the best of all possible means. There were moons to Jupiter, and rings round Saturn; the chancellor sat comfortably or uncomfortably on his woolsack; there was Horace Walpole at Strawberry Hill; and steam was hissing quietly round the corner. Poetry had settled out, fixed on the pole star of the rhymed iambic pentameter, and Handel had turned fireworks into music. The Royal Society could give its attention, inquisitive rather than acquisitive, to the distance of the earth from the sun, finding a happy conjunction of Venus and Tahiti.

The Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty fell into line, though they were, in the event, as much concerned with the terrestrial sphere as the celestial. In a service where heads have been so often harder than cannon-balls, nothing redounds more to the credit of the Royal Navy than its application to hydrography, to the patient tracking and charting of the world's waterways for all men and all ships. It was for glory of the Crown no less than for the planting of the flag that Lieutenant James Cook received his secret instructions.[1]

The idea, the man, the ship, the equipment. It was all forthcoming. Venus and the sun had arranged themselves for the latitude of Tahiti, the southern Cytheros of Bougainville and Wallis, newly

[1] *The Journals of Captain James Cook on his Voyages of Discovery*, edited from the original manuscripts by J. C. Beaglehole. Volume I, *The Voyage of the Endeavour* 1768-1771, edited by J. C. Beaglehole. £4. *Charts and Views*, edited by R. A. Skelton. £2 10s. *Cambridge University Press, for the Hakluyt Society.*

made known. No less known to the Admiralty was James Cook, navigator, astronomer and seaman. And for the ship they chose the *Endeavour* bark, an apple-cheek Whitby job, a stout and stolid ship for unimaginable seas.

The *Endeavour* was 106 feet overall, with a beam of 29 feet and a burthen tonnage of 368. Dr Beaglehole does not give us the important figure of her draught—11 to 13 feet?—but in her were packed about eighty officers and men, a round dozen of royal marines, and a score of supernumeraries including Mr Banks and his retinue of servants. (He refused to sail in the *Resolution* later because the quarters weren't good enough.) The bark was a commissioned ship of the navy. She had a gun deck and all the appurtenances of defence. She needed admiralty pattern salt horse and biscuits, among other necessaries. The sailroom and the bosun's and carpenter's storerooms required generous space. She carried wine for the gentlemen and rum for the seamen. There was ammunition to intimidate the natives, and trinkets to appease them. The great cabin aft was at once a museum and an athenaeum. New scientific instruments, too sensitive for the rude sea as it proved, filled the astronomer's cabin. Only close stowage could take such a distillation of the civilized world to its nether ends. (The earlier ships of the Dutch, sloop style, excellent for the narrows, and the shallows of the Scheldt, lacked the bite that can take the edge off weathered seas.)

As Andrew Sharp makes clear in *Ancient Voyagers of the Pacific*, nothing but ability to beat to windward will serve in the Pacific.[2] The *Endeavour* was a slow sailer, but, with allowance for coastal sailing prudence, the bark could be taken where Lieutenant Cook might choose.

We have the ship, we have the man. Cook is the hero. (And we have in Dr Beaglehole, the antipodean, the historian, the man who sees Cook so warmly and clearly.) Cook is a typically English achievement: the sea made him, and the Royal Navy endorsed the judgement of the waves over which their Lordships assumed presidency. If you like, Cook was, besides the brilliant navigator, observer, humanitarian, et cetera, the great headmaster. That is, he knew everything, as well as his commanding officer's job, from the state of the rigging to the state of an ordinary seaman's gums.

[2] One of Beaglehole's footnotes, from Sir Arthur Grimble, informs us that a rectangle of the Pacific to frame every scattered speck where brown men live contains over one-and-a-half million square miles of ocean and less than 250 square miles of land. And see both Sharp and Beaglehole for prevailing wind charts.

Aft he had the young Banks and the comfortable Solander. With Banks—later to become almost doctrinaire, and a personality even on this voyage—he reached a rich personal understanding. In navy parlance, their faces fitted. The same resolution and resilience might have been detailed against the enemy once again, and Cook would have done very exactly. Part of his success with the crew might have been because he was 'up the hawse pipe' as an officer. Such men are apt to be exacting to the point of severity. But if he flogged seamen for not drinking down his anti-scorbutic potations he was later at pains to demonstrate to them that ice from a berg would not burst water barrels, but, on the contrary, leave them only partly filled when it melted.

Scurvy took no toll. But there were other perils, before the fevers of Batavia. Men were lost through drowning, accident, desertion. Rayden died, 'occasioned by his drinking three half pints of Rum'.[3] And there were always those seamen willing to barter stolen stores, on which their lives might well depend, for the principal product of Tahiti.

Dr Beaglehole has worked from the holograph or Canberra MS, correlated with the Mitchell, Greenwich and Admiralty MSS, and the textual part of the introduction makes fascinating reading. But, as he tells us, for 120 years Hawkesworth was Cook for the account of the first voyage. And it was not always well received. Horace Walpole exclaimed (that Walpole, if memory serves, whom Macaulay castigated as a mouthing, ranting, strutting, voluble jack-pudding), 'The entertaining matter would not fill half a volume; and at best is but an account of the fishermen on the coasts of forty islands.' And good John Wesley, who by the grace of God went never there, was shocked to incredulity by the morals of Tahiti, and equated the whole voyage with Robinson Crusoe.

Hawkesworth was an improver of the plain seamanlike journal, but at least provided us with the comic spectacle of a Scotsman in a rage. For Dalrymple went to battle stations, disappointed of the command. Cook had not discovered the Southern Continent, and Hawkesworth was equally to blame. 'I am very sorry for the discontented state of this good Gentleman's mind,' Hawkesworth replied, 'and most sincerely wish that a southern continent may be found, as I am confident nothing else can make him happy and

[3] Approaching New Zealand, Cook offered a gallon of rum to the man first sighting land by day, and two gallons if it were by night. If the daily tot is still the currency of sailors the present Commissioners have since imposed something of a credit squeeze.

good-humoured.' For that alone he may be forgiven a little literary enlargement in the fashion of the times.

To return to Cook himself. His return home, proceeding on a course 'most advantageous to the Service'; his charting with rapid accuracy of the eastern coast of Australia where existing maps had allowed the inquiring eye to gaze on vacancy; his bark so hopelessly involved in the unknown jungle of reef, and the escape therefrom, need not be dealt with here. For his secret instructions contained this sentence: 'But if you should fail of discovering the Continent before-mention'd, you will upon falling in with New Zeland carefully observe the Latitude and Longitude in which that Land is situated, and explore as much of the Coast as the Condition of the Bark, the health of her Crew, and the State of your Provisions will admit of . . . .'

The sighting of the coast provided no dramatic entry in the journal. There was no 'great land uplifted high' such as astonished Tasman. 'At 2 p.m. saw land from the mast head bearing WBN, which we stood directly for, and could but just see it of the deck at sun set . . . Sunday 8th [October 1769] . . . The land on the Sea-Coast is high with white steep clifts and back inland are very high mountains, the face of the Country is of a hilly surface and appeares to be cloathed with wood and Verdure.' And so ashore (was he to be certain it was New Zealand?) to shoot first the Indian of a cutting-out party, second one who came aboard and snatched a hanger, and then two or three others in a canoe who could not be persuaded by this time to understand the language of a musket fired over their heads as a cordial invitation to close Cook's boat, but moved in to the attack. These were no Aztecs seeing sweaty white men as children of the sun: they were Maoris, and it can only have been an immediate appreciation of its functional value that led to the snatching of the hanger.

It was not a happy introduction. Cook was deeply upset. But there was no ready answer other than the warning musket or four-pounder, excepting the parleys through the Tahitian interpreter Tupia. Cook shot sparingly, then made his largesse lavish. Fortunately the Maoris proved less indifferent to cloth and nails than to death.

The details of Cook's famous circumnavigation are well known to us, if from less definitive editions. The accuracy of that first chart is still the admiration of hydrographers. If Waitemata harbour was by-passed (it is only a backwater to the great gulf and the Bay of Islands); if, on this voyage, no course could be made to the approaches of Port Nicholson; if an island was named for

Banks (and viewed by sea from N.E. and S.E. the peninsula most certainly appears one); if Foveaux strait, with its ugly combination of reefs, rocky islets and bad weather, could be left as a doubtful conjecture—yet the salient features of the coastline were plotted, and the paramount fact of insularity first and finally established. Tasman's thin western coastline was not the northern tip of a vast continent of the south. His New Zeland was two main islands—Tovy-poenammu and Aehei-no-mouwe. (The three islands were later, briefly, to become New Leinster, New Ulster, New Munster.) A strait pierced Tasman's western bay. 'Duskey Bay', to be more useful later, was noted for ready identification by 'five high peaked rocks standing up like the four fingers and thum of a mans hand on which account I have named it *Point five fingers*.' Ship Cove was used for careening, and the clearest evidence adduced of the essentially sarcophagous nature of a people who required variations on a fish diet. (Ship Cove was a happy choice. It is certainly exposed to north-easterlies, it is certainly surrounded by dangerous rocks, sets and overfalls toward the sea and the strait; but, rare in the sounds, it provides an anchorage of 12 to 14 fathoms to a sloping beach and an abundant stream of the sweetest water. In the steep-to sounds a ship anchored up-and-down and made fast to a tree ashore—as Cook was to do in Dusky—cannot be careened.)

Cook left the coast off Cape Farewell on 1 April 1770. He had the most perilous part of the voyage before him, and notable exploration. Wherever he had been, or was to go, his voyages were informed by a wealth of detail geographical, ethnological, ornithological, botanical, astronomical and all manner of other -icals to satisfy the Admiralty and delight the Royal Society. This first voyage to New Zealand was the overture to later, mightier music.

All this, and more, is more appraised by Dr Beaglehole. It is seen against the long introductory essay on earlier explorations. He leaves nothing to the reader but an inarticulate amazement at Cook—and at himself. Volume I is almost as compendious as Q.R. and A.I.[4] To read it in careful detail, following the charts and views, takes almost as long as the voyage itself. But it cannot be recommended for reading at sea, or in bed. It is 9⅝ths x 6⅛th x 2⅞ths, and it weighs 3lb 8 oz. The preliminaries run to cclxxxiv pp, and the appendices to 175, not including the index.

Dr Beaglehole, scholar that he is, is determined we shall be denied nothing remotely relevant. He gives us a general introduction to the Pacific, an introduction to the voyage, a note of

[4] Queen's (or King's) Regulations and Admiralty Instructions.

Polynesian history, a textual introduction, a discussion on printed sources and on the printing, variant versions, other journals, a calendar of documents, and newspaper extracts. In all admiration can one say 'Here is God's plenty' with as the Pacific.

The folio of charts and views edited by R. A. Skelton is reproduced from the original manuscripts. They show unique qualities of clarity and draughtsmanship, whether by Cook or his officers. Variation is frequently noted, and the soundings on inshore tracks are meticulous.

When the Hakluyt Society has produced the volumes of the second and third voyages under the general editorship of Dr Beaglehole, a similar service of scholarship for Banks's journals will leave the classic period of Pacific exploration complemented and complete.

Note on Longitude

Since longitude, besides degrees, can be measured in hours, minutes and seconds up to 12 hours, which postulates a mean meridian, the chronometer provides the best answer to position east-west. Harrison's had been tested in 1763 for the Admiralty prize of £20,000 but Cook did not carry one of the new 'time keepers'. Maskelyne, the Astronomer Royal, was dubious of their worth; he furnished Cook and Mr Green with vast and unnecessary mathematical means of working out longitude. By azimuth Cook was able to check variation at any given place he was luckily free of deviations but the ingenious notion of an isogonic chart overlooked the little fact that variation of the compass is not even a constant variable.

From ignorance of longitude Columbus hopefully imagined he had learned Cathay, and navigation by squinting through holes in a coconut is a Polynesian myth when they could neither beat to windward nor master dead reckoning. Cook can write, 'The observation for Settleing the Longitude were no less numberous and made as often as the Sun and Moon came in play'. Where observations cannot be made it is possible to run on dead reckoning until they can be, and a Mercator scale of longitude can be made by simple cosine-secant construction—a help to dead reckoning when latitude is known. Cook (and Green) achieved accuracy to within half a degree. It is more than sufficient for deep sea navigation. Given good lookouts and a proper vigilance to the sea the navigator, a landfall once made, was faced with the more difficult tasks of coastal waters—working from fix to fix, standing off a

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [

Anglo-French veto of the Security Council resolution calling on all governments to refrain from the actual or threatened use of force, and the subsequent attack on Egypt, constituted one of the most sensational political blunders of the century. I am less concerned with the grave and humiliating effects of this blunder upon the prestige and interests of the United Kingdom, than to raise some questions posed by the instantaneous support extended to Sir Anthony Eden by the New Zealand Government.

In supporting the Anglo-French policy, New Zealand gravely compromised its reputation as a member of the U.N.O. Most people outside of the Arab world, one supposes, have a good deal of sympathy for Israel, and, outside of North America, most observers are agreed that the United States's fumbling in the Middle East did much to provoke the November crisis. Nevertheless, Israel *did* attack Egypt, and faced with that incontrovertible fact the United States acted responsibly and correctly when it sought to place the authority of the U.N.O. behind a cease-fire directive. When New Zealand acquiesced in the Anglo-French veto and attack on Egypt, it surely chose the worst possible occasion on which to reverse this country's policy. No country had been more outspoken than New Zealand in protesting against the inclusion of the veto in the Security Council's constitution, no country had more vigorously and properly condemned the abuses of the veto. It is still too early to assess the ill consequences for the U.N.O. of the Anglo-French policy last November (the writer does not share the easy optimism, that balm for sore consciences, of those who assure us that the creation of the Middle East Police Force meant that the Anglo-French intervention strengthened the U.N.O.), but there can be no doubt that in the eyes of the greater part of the world New Zealand is now numbered among those countries which support the U.N.O. when, in their judgement, it suits them to do so. Moreover, the New Zealand Government chose to do this not that it might support a genuine *United Kingdom* policy, but in support of a *Right Wing Conservative* policy (that severely strained the cohesion of the Conservative Party itself), a policy that provoked within the United Kingdom an unqualified protest from Her Majesty's Opposition, no less than from prominent men and women in all walks of life, and from many of the country's most reputable journals and newspapers.

The emergence of Arabic and, more particularly, Asian nationalism raises problems as far-reaching and disturbing as any that have ever faced the Western World. Seen against this background, the problems posed by Communism may well before long take on

a very secondary significance. Indeed, those Governments that diagnose the problems posed by Arabic-Asian nationalism in terms of Communism simply clear the path for Soviet diplomacy; and, in passing, it should be said that they also help create the conditions most favourable to the triumph within the Soviet of the very political thugs whom they have every reason to fear.

The complex subject of Asian nationalism hardly lends itself to profitable treatment within the confines of a paragraph. But in view of New Zealand's post-war policy in the Middle and Far East, it is perhaps worth reminding ourselves of the obvious, of the fact that New Zealand is situated in the South Pacific, and that this alone should induce this country to do everything possible to persuade the peoples of Asia that we wish to be their good neighbours, that we welcome their transition from dependent status to political independence, and that we are anxious to receive them on equal terms as members of an organized international community.

Admittedly, it is not always easy to say how general principles of the kind described may best be applied to particular circumstances; but when allowances have been made for this consideration, it remains true that in many important ways New Zealand seems to act with a perverse disregard for political realities. The Government, for example, while hastening to support Sir Anthony Eden's armed intervention in Egypt, still refuses to follow the lead of the United Kingdom ('to stand where Britain stands, to go where Britain goes', as the Prime Minister has put it) in extending recognition to the mainland Government of China. Conversely, New Zealand supports the United States in encouraging the dangerously hopeless aspirations of the Formosan régime, but opposed the United States when that country insisted that the Middle East crisis of last November called for United Nations action, rather than free-for-all intervention by Britain and France. It appears, then, that if New Zealand, a small country in an exposed geographical position, wishes both to weaken the U.N.O., and at the same time to incite the resentment and chauvinist passions of those Asiatic neighbours who may be expected to have a political future, the Government has gone the right way about it. But it is far from clear, even when allowance is made for the fact that governments necessarily shape foreign policy on the basis of information not available to the ordinary citizen, that this behaviour can be expected to serve the long run interests of New Zealand, even if more could be said for it than in fact may be said in terms of hand to mouth expediency.

Operatic Occasions

CHAMBER OPERA IN NEW ZEALAND

J. M. THOMSON

OPERA today is in an interesting stage of development. The comparatively few great opera houses of the world, most of them heavily subsidized, continue to mount impressive productions of grand opera but the art of opera itself, in order to keep alive in difficult conditions and preserve its vitality, has had to change its shape. It has done so by the revival and fresh development of an already existing form, the chamber opera. In the eighteenth century and earlier, many operas, from one to three acts, did not depend on elaborate resources for their success. In the nineteenth century chamber opera fell out of favour and staging became grander than ever, reaching its peak in the early years of this century. This is the tradition which Covent Garden and Sadlers Wells concentrate on keeping alive today. By contrast, the world of chamber opera presents a scene of intense and scattered activity and of continual experiment. In Britain many small companies have sprung up, the chief of which is the English Opera Group with Benjamin Britten as its keystone. Of the other companies, some such as the Intimate Opera Company concentrate on eighteenth-century works and others combine one-act operas with their own versions of the larger operas. Composers are presented with the task of writing for such small combinations as soprano, tenor and bass, with piano accompaniment, or at the most a small chamber orchestra. Television is also commissioning work from them. In America chamber opera is equally alive and Menotti enjoys a general popularity as yet denied to Britten.

The effect of writing in this medium has been to compel composers to become masters of their craft, for in such a transparent medium everything counts. A successful production depends as well on the long association between composer, libretto writer, producer and conductor making for team work in the finest sense.

In New Zealand we have an opera company splendidly equipped to present chamber opera. The New Zealand Opera Company, founded by Donald Munro in 1954, is now known all over the country and their latest productions in Wellington last December have added to their already high prestige. Detailed criticism of Mozart's *The Impresario* and Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors* is at this stage redundant, but one point is worth making

about the lesser success of the two, *The Impresario*, whose problems proved too much for the young singers taking part. This was the very noticeable improvement in acting and singing which took place in the short space of three or four performances. *Amahl* on the other hand was a triumph in every way—for its producer John Trevor; costume and set designer Raymond Boyce; the chief players, Bertha Rawlinson and Wayne Healey; and for the orchestra and its conductor, James Robertson. *Amahl* is an achievement also for Menotti for here his tenderness, sense of melancholy and pathos had an almost magical play. The Menotti who used clever tricks in his theatrical tour-de-force *The Medium* was practically absent. Professional musicians who are dismayed by his disconcerting profusion of styles would still detect incongruous elements, but these played a very small part in a remarkably well-integrated opera. Nor were many people likely to be troubled by the failure of the opera to rise fully to the climax at the end.

This added success of the Opera Company does not however disguise the fact that the Company is now in a critical stage of development. It can make ends meet but it cannot grow. It cannot become the centre of a vital tradition of operatic performances on its present income. Supported by a small government grant for which the Company must indeed be grateful, by the contributions of the relatively small number of Opera Society members and by its own profits the Company's urgent need is capital for development. The Government is already assisting, but the patronage of powerful members of our society like civic authorities and large commercial firms is equally necessary. If a few city and town councils, a few large business organizations, could in this time of prosperity invest in opera, even quite modestly to the extent of a few hundred pounds annually, they would over the years win for themselves a new and enviable reputation for enlightened self-interest. This is something that their day-to-day activities and normal advertising can never give. The Company's present work is admirable but the gains for the whole country would be enormous if they were helped to take the plunge and become a full-time organization.

ORPHEUS IN NEW PLYMOUTH

FREDERICK PAGE

THE New Plymouth Choral Society, under the spur of its conductor, Mr William Komlos, gave recently what is said to be the first performance in New Zealand of Gluck's *Orfeo*. The sea at New

Plymouth in early September burns with the poet's driftwood blue; from the bungalow gardens, les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir, Egmont has a classical look, and by some miracle, the local theatre is horse-shoe shaped, and is charming. Alas that it has been recently done up in nibble-nook colours!

Knowing New Zealand choral societies, one can well imagine the work Mr Komlos had to do to get this opera on to the stage. The scenery was agreeable, the producer, Mrs Strang, handled the eighty members of the society expertly, the work of Poul Gnatt's ballet company made a real contribution. Donald Munro was a handsome Orfeo; Mr Munro takes the stage easily and sings well. But whether a baritone should take the part made famous by castrati, tenors and contraltos, I am not so sure. The other-worldly magic of the part demands an artificial solution. Maureen Fletcher sang the part of Amor with imagination; Rachel Orson, a local singer, sang in touching, simple fashion. Mr Komlos made an unforgiveable cut, the heavenly dance of the blessed spirits, but the beautiful moments of the work were there, Eurydice's looking back, the striking of Orfeo's lyre, the sombre beauty of the opening choral scenes, and the whole presentation was a triumph for him.

The legend of Orpheus was telling and strange in the presence of Egmont.

BRUCE MASON

The Chinese Classical Theatre

I WENT three times to the Chinese Classical Season last October, on successive nights. I must confess that until the interval on the first evening, I was ill-at-ease, and somewhat confused. I was not, to put it facetiously, orientated. By the end of the evening, I felt slightly drunk, stunned by the weird noise and fierce colour, awhirl with its vivacity, charmed with its delicacy, wonderfully stimulated and exhilarated, and my excitement mounted, night by night.

The season was packed at every performance, and it is worthy

of record that at least a third of each audience was Chinese. The Consul-General for Formosa made a statement in the press, expressing his hostility to what he considered the naked political purpose of the company, but his warning was not heeded by the Wellington Cantonese, who, doubtless as ignorant of classical Mandarin as ourselves, gave every sign of delight, and finally honoured the company with a formal banquet. There was a good deal of silliness talked about the Company's visit, culminating in the comic opera of the postponed Melbourne season. Some people seemed to imagine that attendance implied *de facto* recognition of the communist régime, and that the charm and vivacity of the players sought to demonstrate that everything was hunky-dory over there. I think they were right on the second count: that was the purpose of the Company, which it shares in common with the activities of the British Council and say, The Voice of America. On the face of it, a perfectly appropriate reason.

What did the Company offer that was so compelling and exciting? With no more knowledge of Chinese operatic conventions than I could pick up in three performances, I can view the season only as an ignorant observer, and describe the response which this wholly foreign theatre evoked in me. First, the season seemed rather variety than opera. As well as excerpts from operas in the classical Peking repertory, there were dances of provincial origin, extended ballet sequences and mime plays, and performances of traditional music by string orchestra. I should like to examine each in turn.

The first opera I saw was *The Drunken Beauty*, one of the most famous in the Peking repertoire. The story is of the slenderest. A favourite concubine arrives at a place selected for tryst with her lord, only to discover that he has departed with another. To allay her mortification, she drowns her sorrows. It took her three quarters of an hour. This opera opened the first programme I saw, and I cannot say I was wholly with it. It seemed to me then, and now, a mistake to open a programme with a long operatic excerpt, particularly one of so little incident. One was thrown back therefore on the delicate performance of Miss Chiang Hsin-Jung, the company's leading actress. With the greatest refinement and grace, she conducted us through the set of variations on this slender theme, a performance as delicate and precise as the best Chinese art. Her long slender hands, transparent seeming with the palms and nails pink tinted, were irresistibly eloquent; the gestures of European ballerinas, even the best, seemed by comparison crude and limited in range. Her voice, for which she is renowned, startled

me at first; produced from the back of the throat, it had the piercing quality of a high wind instrument. I grew accustomed to it later, and could surrender to its strange hypnosis. I saw Miss Chiang later in the season in another opera, *The Jade Bracelet*, and this I found unalloyed pleasure. Again, the story was of the slightest. A girl is feeding her chickens, a young man passes, is enamoured of her, and drops a bracelet. The girl sees it, cannot decide whether to pick it up or not, but finally does so, thereby plighting her troth. Miss Chiang's deliciously fragile performance, full of a waking womanliness, I found entirely captivating.

Here style was all, and the style was exquisite. What coarse barbarities our own theatre seemed to offer by comparison! Perhaps, for sheer charm, the most beguiling of all was *The Journey Down the River*, with only two characters, an old boatman, and a young girl wishing to be ferried down to her lover. The old boatman looking like one of those chunky little wood carvings one sees occasionally, benign and mischievous, teasing the girl, and she, beautifully dressed, wide-eyed with a fragile anxiety, created an atmosphere of humorous tenderness, which seems to lie at the base of this art. No properties, of course, no boat. We created that ourselves from their skilful mime, and how much more real that boat than any too too solid stage property! All the operas were done on virtually bare stages. In front, a carpet, half way back, centre, a table and a couple of stools, which can serve as anything at all. The greatest appeal of Chinese opera is to the imagination, and the experience this can afford when well done is incomparably rich.

The dances were pleasant enough, tailored, it would seem, for export. The most popular, and the most frequently given, was *The Lotus Dance*, of cloying sweetness, cleverly danced, ruthlessly precise, but an example of the sentimental *chinoiserie* affected by local laundries and greengrocers in their calendars. Ideal for dancing teachers for their Christmas break-up, it seemed out of place in this repertory. *The Scarf Dance* was splendidly colourful and vigorous, and the others, attractive enough. But with repetition, they palled. Here I must mention *Yentang Mountain*, a ballet celebrating the battle between peasant soldiers and imperial troops. This was entirely magnificent. Superbly colourful, fierce and exhilarating, it was, I am inclined to think, the most exciting ballet I have ever seen. The stage seemed alive with flying bodies, performing the most hair-raising feats, tumbling, leaping, falling, vaulting, with a precision and exact timing only possible surely, after the most rigorous training. Their control was absolute. The speed

of some of the intricate mass movements, the sudden stillness after the wildest turmoil, was quite staggering. It roused the Wellington audience to frenzied enthusiasm.

There were several performances by the orchestra of traditional Chinese music. I found it less attractive than I had expected. Even after three evenings, its character seemed lulling and flaccid, and oddly contemporary in quality, not with modern music strictly, but with dance music; Filipino band style, as a musician friend had it, aptly I think. To my ear, there was nothing remote about the intervals or the harmony; it seemed, basically at least, diatonic. My chief pleasure during these numbers was looking at the instruments, lutes and viols, in polished wood of exquisite grain.

The costumes and head-dresses were of great splendour. There must have been hundreds of costumes, and many were a feast to the eye. The subtlest and most daring combinations were used: I recall one of olive green and royal blue, but reds and greens predominated in every possible combination of tones. In texture, the costumes were no less taking, quilted surfaces alternating with straight silk panels and the richest brocades. Make-up, particularly those of the painted characters, was extraordinarily elaborate. It is reported that some of these took over three hours to complete. I can well believe it. They had the effect on stage of gleaming enamel in the fiercest colours, red, white and black being predominant. The female make-ups were interesting, in carrying the pink from the cheeks as far as the eyebrows. It had a startling effect on the eyes, making them seem much larger and more lustrous. In this area, as in all others, there was a supreme professionalism at work, the clearest evidence of the highest artistic discipline which informed every actor, dancer and singer in this company.

Reviews

I, FOR ONE . . . . Frank Sargeson. *The Caxton Press.* 6s.

THIS short novel first came out in *Landfall* in June 1952 and has now been published in book form. Comment upon it has already appeared in these pages; last September, for example, David Hall wrote that '*I, For One* . . . . necessitates a complete reassessment' of all the author's previous work.

It is certainly something new, so new that it hardly seems to be 'real Sargeson' at all—an apparently stupid phrase no doubt, but really a tribute to the strength and consistency of his earlier stories. He has spoken of 'his New Zealand' and he might equally well have referred to 'his New Zealanders', but no vestige of either appears in this book. He explores respectable urban middle-class life from within, through the experience (and here is part of the novelty) not of a potential rebel like Henry Griffiths, but of a character who, though she feels isolated, is essentially conformist.

The novel, in diary form, tells the story of three months in 1950 in the life of Katherine Sheppard, a spinsterish, frustrated schoolteacher, no longer young, whose adult experience has been sheltered, petty and restricted. It opens immediately after the death of her father, whom she has idolized; '. . . if ever there was a Christian he was one . . . . I can never cease to be proud of my father . . . . when I think of his *goodness* . . . .' Numbed by her loss she begins to write in the hope that self-expression will re-awaken feeling, and continues intermittently to recount a love affair with a middle-aged American scholar, Dr Hubert Nock. Before the affair comes to an end she accidentally learns of her father's first marriage and divorce, and afterwards her mother, mistaking nervous prostration for the after-effects of an abortion, shocks Katherine by unmasking an utter lack of regard for conventional standards of sexual conduct. To crown the many and complex ironies of the story, her father's youthful wildness is revealed. It turns out that pregnancy alone enabled the divorce and induced her mother to ignore increasing distaste for her father in favour of marriage.

When the diary opens Katherine feels that she sees things only from the outside; she is excluded and longs to find out 'what really *does* go on'. She learns; but in the clarity of vision resulting from her emotional crises, she also becomes conscious of 'the dark clouds of yesterday and tomorrow, of anxiety and dread, dissatisfaction and regret' that have overshadowed her life. At the story's end she is an outsider once more, contemplating everything 'with the eyes of a stranger, of one set apart'. Disillusionment is the theme; most of what Katherine believed in originally has collapsed at the finish. But as the title suggests, hers is an individual case; there are no wider social implications like those in Mr Sargeson's earlier writing, despite the ridiculous statement in the blurb about 'the significant theme of intercolonial relations'. *Intercolonial* of all words! Middle-class conventionality lets Katherine down, which is bad luck for her.

The novel's cohesion, which seems to me to be its most impressive quality, sets it apart from Mr Sargeson's previous stories, of any length, all loosely put together as they are. Despite a certain amount of episodic material, the temptation to include which must have been constantly offered by the diary form, the structure is

tight, unified and economical. A number of illustrations could be given, some very subtle—the fleeting, indirect allusion near the end to the unpleasantness of Katherine's day-dreams, for example, which is explicitly commented upon earlier. Such unobtrusive touches are entirely appropriate and natural. Again, the mother's self-damning assumption about Katherine's final illness is prepared for almost from the first page, so that when it comes it administers the fullest possible ironic shock by its rightness. The narrative throughout is skilfully controlled; suspense is effectively created and sustained. No one could complain of technical naiveté.

The weakness in my opinion lies in Hubert, who is hardly ever convincing. The motive for his first marriage and in fact all the ideas he holds as an American are improbably asinine; and when simply as a human being he moralizes and generalizes, he is a platitudinous and sententious bore. At only one point does he seem to me to come alive, the moment in the Jolly Sailor when, as Katherine writes, 'he retreated an immense distance away from me into a mood of blackest gloom, where it was quite impossible for me to try to follow him'. He is much more a caricature than a character. So is Katherine at first. I think it is hard to imagine anyone writing a diary in the style she quite frequently adopts. Her self-consciousness about words, for one thing, is the sort of pose which might be assumed in correspondence in order to amuse—but writing for oneself alone? At these moments it is as if Mr Sargeson were parodying the letters of a real person rather than satirizing the commonplace, conventional, prissy schoolmarm that Katherine is at the beginning. When Mr Sargeson puts her under emotional stress, however, he divests her diary of most of these tricks.

The final disclosures about the father, also, are difficult to accept, for they seem by the thickness with which they are laid on, to weaken instead of reinforcing what goes before. They come too pat; one remembers how Hardy repeated himself too often and too easily in *Life's Little Ironies*.

The episodes which are interspersed within the main narrative are short stories in effect, though each is relevant to the whole. Miss Drake and the encounter with the two girls on the beach are unforgettable; Katie Willis is a masterpiece which gains from as well as contributing to its setting.

A. W. Stockwell

IMMANUEL'S LAND. Maurice Duggan. *The Pilgrim Press.* 12s. 6d.

FALTER TOM AND THE WATER BOY. Maurice Duggan. *New Zealand School Journal,* Part Three, Spring and Summer 1956.

THIS collection of stories by Maurice Duggan does more than confirm the good impression they made when read in isolation. They

belong together and each enhances the value of the others, so that the reader is left to wish only that a more thoughtful arrangement of them had been made. The longish piece called 'Voyage', a description of travel to and within Europe, should have been set apart from the stories, and the order of the stories themselves might have been improved upon. Mr Duggan is not so heavy in the material of fiction that he can afford to diminish his weight unnecessarily.

It is because his stories represent as it were a carving down from the block of experience rather than the modelling up from the imagination that they display within themselves very little growth, little energy of an expanding sort, little plot and no great exploration of character. They are skilful reductions of experience to moments of crisis, not necessarily catastrophic. So much is trimmed away to leave the situation single that occasionally it seems that only the human circumstance remains, almost independently of the humans who create it. Many of the stories run only to four or five pages, so severe has been the exclusion of penumbral affairs, and only the pure inmost shadow of the crisis is left. The effect of reading several such stories in succession however is to be assured that in each case there is nothing missing and nothing irrelevant. The writer's imaginative energy has gone always towards contraction of the originating idea. Such economy is achieved only at great expense, and it may be doubted whether Mr Duggan can go on living at this rate.

The really surprising thing about the writing however is that despite this scrupulous limitation of material the language in which the surviving details are related is not itself subjected to any such austerity. Mr Duggan is always careful and conscious of his prose but his care in this matter is to budget to the outside rather than to the inside limit. There is a manifest delight in the selection of words and the building of rhythms which is never offensive in the *stories*, where what is being told has such urgent relevance to the theme; but in the 'Voyage' the prose is apt to draw attention to itself, as though Mr Duggan had looked longer and more lovingly at his sentences than he did at the places and the people he describes. Thus he obliges us to take our stand on one side or the other of a critical rift. Consider for example:

> Along the road the maize stalks, dark brown at the top and pale burned brown below, bend harvested before the vines' lush bloom. The Vespas go noisily past in a bursting flare of open exhaust and the bus climbs slowly up the first hill. At the first turning and exactly in the centre of the road the bus breaks down.

If there is any value to be found in extended writing of this sort, not all of it derives from *what* we are told. The prose itself with its repetitions and balances, its adroit placing of stresses,

consonants and vowels, and above all its firm rhythms may well make the larger claim on our attention. Only the reader who is ready, if reluctant, to enjoy well-modelled prose for its own sake will gain the full pleasure that Mr Duggan offers. Not that 'Voyage' is limited to such secondary appeals; but the keen sense of mood and the flair for finding and establishing the right external detail do not by any means alone give the piece its distinction.

Among the stories 'Towards the Mountains' stands out as displaying all the best features variously found in the others. One of Mr Duggan's recurrent themes is the child's perplexity over adult behaviour and adult talk, and in this story the theme is handled with exceptional power through the device of doubling-up the presentation of it. The story falls into two halves in each of which a boy becomes involved in adult affairs beyond his understanding, the first scene being the consequence of the second. The force of the story comes partly from Mr Duggan's having chosen a child on the threshold of adolescence, so that it is not so much his bewilderment as his momentary gleam of *awareness* which turns the knife. Mainly however it is the structure of the story which makes it outstanding. It has an internal strength of form missing from the other stories which are unified by mood and moment alone.

In the *School Journal* appears a story called 'Falter Tom and the Water Boy' which has the rarely-captured quality of a folk tale. Mr Duggan has appropriately adopted a matter-of-fact, almost Norse, naivety of narrative style which suits both his intended readers and his subject. Falter Tom is a convincing study of an eighty-year-old simple sailor; and the Water Boy, a sort of composite Peter Pan and Water Babies Tom (he lives in the sea and never grows up) has nevertheless genuine qualities of his own, notably a grave and practical concern for his ancient protégé. The relationship between these two is strong and unquestioned either by themselves or the reader. Both characters receive vivid extensions of personality through the use of colour and object, the boy with his green body, copper-coloured mane and slanted cat's-eyes, and the old man with his stiff leg, his pipe, his watch, his cottage, his sea-chest, his cups and kettles. Under the spell of the narrative all is sea-changed, the impossible tale becomes real, and there are liberated the satisfying and unidentified meanings which give the best children's stories their deeper appeal. It is heartening to observe, in a story like this one, how well the *School Journal* now serves its readers.

If Mr Duggan is to increase the reputation which these stories will gain for him it is almost certain that he will have to venture further into the contemporary New Zealand scene. The richness of texture will hardly continue to be adequate compensation for some creative deficiencies. The astringent treatment of situation has as an

unavoidable result a blunting of character-drawing; the dialogue is correct rather than revealing; the element of comment, though sincere, is still rudimentary; there is never the wit, the pace, the vitality of dialogue, the compelling narrative or failing that the exposure of complex and unwonted human relationships that are found for example in the best modern American stories. The very crises themselves upon which all is dependent are seldom quite secure from banality (even in 'Towards the Mountains' the crisis is uneasily reminiscent of 'something seen' in Stella Gibbons's or L. P. Hartley's woodshed).

Nevertheless, in presenting without blemish half-realized states of mind and feeling, the simpler astonishments and misgivings, especially of children, and in making that presentation in language which is both graceful and exact, Mr Duggan is already a highly accomplished writer.

R. A. Copland

A BOOK OF AUSTRALIAN VERSE. Selected and with an introduction by Judith Wright. *Oxford.* 18s. 6d.

I

MAKING landfall on Australian poetry out of a Pacific of personal ignorance, what does one expect to find? No doubt, we expect that Australian poets and critics will be preoccupied with the same (partly fictitious) problems as ourselves: a short history in which the early verse has at least—perhaps at most—historic interest; the lack of living relation to a new land, seen by its inhabitants as a thing to exploit; the attempt to come to terms with it all, and to adapt a tradition, or do without one.

But respectful voices assure us that it is more than this, and one at first assumes that Australian poetry has a longer history than ours, and has lived through more of the contemporaneous phases of English poetry. We are being twentieth century without having been much else; Australian poets, whose merits have been saluted by the big drums of the *Bulletin* or the *Meanjin* kettledrums, have been Victorians, Symbolists, Georgians, as well as popular balladeers.

Coming to the new *Book of Australian Verse* with such expectations, one's first reaction is one of blank incredulity. The massive early strata are there alright, but what do they contain except Piltdown skulls and the addled eggs of dinosaurs? Is some new Ern Malley pulling our leg? Surely so much bad verse has never been gathered outside *The Stuffed Owl?* not mediocre verse, but what Belloc called 'strong, heavy, brown, bad verse'. That is the impression, at least, of the first eighty pages and nearly as many years;

and although we may argue with some of Miss Wright's selections later, the impression here is not misleading. Harpur, it is true, has some virtues of an eighteenth century, rather than Victorian, minor poet; but then follows the sentimental cobberism of Kendall and the stuffed-owlery of Boake, and O'Dowd's ghastly fluency and capital-letter personifications.[1]

Brennan, the first to be honoured in this volume with a group of poems, seems to have been an impressive man, but his verse is thin, hectic and egocentric. Then there is Neilson's sentiment and Dyson's platitudes; Gellert striking out some real feeling under the impact of war, but followed by Furnley Maurice issuing his breast-thumping orders to the Lord; and a whole mess of Enoch-Soamesism and faded Georgianism; and Hugh McCrae with his fauns-and-gumtrees tushery and overtones of Krafft-Ebing.

On the whole, what overrated loud-voiced booming confident bores they are. They stand guarding the pass like the monstrous images on the road to Erewhon—'the mouths of all were more or less open, and as I looked at them from behind, I saw that their heads had been hollowed'. And their booming chant follows us to the present day. William Baylebridge, said to be recently 'revived', is the biggest boomer of the lot, an absolute Marabar caves in verse.

In all this early work, there are two pieces of refreshment. One is a single poem by Henry Lawson, the work of a natural-born yarner and rhymer, a nugget amid poetastic wastes. The other is the verse of Mary Gilmore, who makes no claim to greatness, but is simple and intelligent and has quick sympathies.

One begins to suspect, in fact, that Australian poetry is not essentially better-off than ours: its revered early pioneers are no better than Domett or Reeves or Adams: they merely talked louder and have been taken more seriously. Only when one comes to Kenneth Slessor does a real poet emerge; for though he has at the start his share of sugary sham-classicism, he works out of it; in 'Five Visions of Captain Cook' and in later poems like 'Five Bells', there is, perhaps for the first time, an Australian poet whose voice is not too big for his thought. He may have, one imagines, something of the same dividing-line importance that Mason has for us. After him, as the anthology shows, there is still regression and triviality, but there is also real poetry in many of the younger writers, who have the blessed gift of not trying to say too much.

One hesitates at the influential figure of R. D. FitzGerald, who is rather the big voice again; but he has real vigour of language and appears to better advantage in a later poem like 'Heemskerk Shoals' than perhaps he does here, in the better known 'Essay on Memory'.

[1] For reasons given, Miss Wright excludes the Australian ballad: but even the term ballad is misleading for, as the recent anthology by Stewart and Keesing reveals, they are 'ballads' only in the late Victorian drawing-room sense—like George R. Sims but without his social guts.

Peter Hopegood, with his compost of all mythologies, is a pretentious but interesting queer fish, somewhere between Robert Graves and D'Arcy Cresswell. W. Hart-Smith has already something more like our own understatement and elusiveness; Douglas Stewart uses the Australian big speech, but taut and clear.

Out of some forty 'younger' writers (middle-aged and under) one tends to pick out a smaller anthology of quality. There are, for example, J. A. R. McKellar's 'Twelve O'Clock Boat', a piece of genuine Australian classicism; and Eve Langley's 'Native-born'; and the crisp, allusive verse of David Campbell; and Rosemary Dobson's nicely sardonic Devil and Angel; and the verbal density in Francis Webb's 'View of Montreal' and several of his shorter poems; and the violent but effective images of John Philip's 'The Subject of the Bishop's Miracle'. Close inspection would certainly reveal others; and incidentally, a healthy proportion of them are by the thirty-or-under group.

As a further personal choice, I would pick out three poets who, here and elsewhere, seem to show sustained quality. J. P. McAuley, whose considerable satirical gift is missed here, has the ability to think in images and write verse with a clean edge to it. A. D. Hope has a hint of the melodramatic, but disciplined and carried off by lucidity and compactness of phrasing. And Judith Wright herself, in a selection which perhaps suffers from editorial modesty, has a moving poem, 'Woman to Man', and a beautiful one, 'Legend'. They are the kind of writers that others could learn from: one would like to see more of them. But, here and elsewhere, Miss Wright's selection seems to suffer from a compromise between quality and representation, leading almost inevitably to 'double standard' judgments. What seems to be needed is what Allen Curnow has already done for us here—a ruthless editing-out of earlier poetry, a considerable discrimination in the present, and (as a result) a more rounded presentation of the really worthwhile.

II

Re-examining this anthology, is there any standard by which we can speak of a development in Australian verse as a whole—even of 'progress', if that word applies to the arts at all? There are at least two rough tests that can be applied; the first is concerned with clarity of imagery and of the language in which it is expressed; the second with clarity of ideas.

The Stuffed Owl element, with its bathetic images and inflated phrasing, is not hard to demonstrate from the early part of the book. Some specimens:

Boake: . . . Where the platypus twists and doubles,
Leaving a train of tiny bubbles;
Rid at last of their earthly troubles—

That's where the dead men lie!

O'Dowd: . . . Nor while the tiger, Sin,
'Mid youths and maidens roams,
Should Duty skulk within
These selfish cosy homes.

McCrae: Her little sober churchy hat,
Her month-old summer muslin gown,
The short half-stays I marvelled at—
A Frenchman's symphony in brown—

But this sort of thing definitely decreases, and there is a corresponding increase in exact seeing and precise diction, as in—

Slessor: . . . Or something had just run, gone behind grass,
When, blank and bone-white, like a maniac's thought,
The naptha-flash of lightning slit the sky,
Knifing the dark with deathly photographs.

Langley: . . I found a kangaroo. Tall, dewy, dead,
So like a woman, she lay silent there.
Her ivory hands, black-nailed, crossed on her breast,
Her skin of sun and moon hues, fallen cold.

McAuley: The delicate steel cranes manoeuvre
Like giant birds above their load;
The high song of the tyres is heard
Along the whitening road.

I think we can say that something healthy has happened to a poetry where Eve Langley's kangaroo replaces O'Dowd's paper tiger, and McCrae's 'cataract of lingerie' gives way to McAuley's cranes.

The other thing involves larger issues that can only be hinted at here—the clarification of poetic ideas in relation to the besetting problems of land, landscape, history and people. It seems to be a characteristic ambition of Australian poets to write long poems—an unusual and praiseworthy ambition in an age of 'brief complexities', but running the risk of producing work which is (like the Australian continent itself) empty in the middle. The earlier poets appear in the pose of earnest sages all preaching some incoherent and incomprehensible form of Higher Thought, something with a dusty, late-Victorian smell of Darwin and Nietzsche and similar worthies, poised between a strenuous, evolutionary vision of the past and a wistful aspiration for a vaguely inflated future. And though the expression of this thought is not always quite contemptible, it inevitably runs off into large, loose statements about Life, Earth, Will, and all those notions which Kingsley Amis has called

Rhyme-words of poets in a silver age:
Silver of the bauble, not of the knife.

Again, some specimens—Brennan:

. . . and darkling on my darkling hill
heard thro' the beaches' sullen boom
heroic note of living will
ring trumpet-clear against the fight . . .

Baylebridge:

The Being that knows not death,
The Being that e'er shall be,
Wherein my soul, flesh threading, hath,
In force, an Earth's eternity.

Furnley Maurice:

Gentle curates and slaughtermen
Murder the cattle in the pen:
Body, Spirit, the Word, the Breath
Only survive by so much death.

And, again, one can measure the development of Australian poetry by the decrease of this sort of thing (though it never quite dies out) and the increase of something else obliquely opposed to it—an increasingly adult and critical awareness of the human situation seen, not in terms of large abstractions, but in the concrete symbols of one's own place and people. R. D. FitzGerald is almost a transition-point between the two, and could be quoted either way. And then one senses the real, uncomfortable thing in lines like Hope's

Her rivers of water drown among inland sands,
The river of her immense stupidity

Floods her monotonous tribes from Cairns to Perth . . .

It is there again in Ken Barratt's 'Burke and Wills', and in Douglas Stewart's vision, flamboyant but not false, of the land 'like a great golden cloud . . . where men shall walk at last like spirits of fire'; or in those reverberant lines of David Campbell's—

The Murray's source is in the mind
And at a word it flows.

On the last page of the book, perhaps deliberately, are some lines of Ray Mathew—

But the poems come easiest
when you're really belonging,
and the deep earth and the dark sea
find in you home.

I doubt whether they 'come easiest', but they seem to come truest, when we see the universal through the particular in which alone it exists, and discover the human predicament through our own.

To that extent the development of Australian poetry resembles that of ours. But the difference in the feel of the two situations, the difference between island and island-continent, greatly affects the result; and this is seen, not only in imagery—consider the distinctive connotation that 'river' has for these Australians—but in the whole poetic idiom. A rough balance sheet would show that where the Australian tends towards the longer descriptive poem, the New Zealander tends to the shorter meditative lyric; the virtue of one is clarity and fullness, the big speech, of the other, subtlety and spareness, the quiet speech; their corresponding vices are bombast on one side and poverty on the other. For us, 'enough! or too much'; for them, perhaps, 'the road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom'. It is at least an interesting possibility that, despite a certain similarity of situation, our two literatures may be complementary rather than parallel.

M. K. Joseph

SCHOLAR ERRANT. R. M. Burdon. *The Pegasus Press.* 15s.

A PROFESSOR of chemistry who taught physics to Rutherford, attacked the institution of marriage, experimented with communal living, warred almost continuously with his governing body which finally dismissed him, and devoted much of his restless intellect to defending rather than developing a theory in astronomy, would be an interesting personality anywhere. In nineteenth century New Zealand and in the unadventurous society of Christchurch, he was a phenomenon. Mr R. M. Burdon tells the story of Alexander Bickerton in one hundred and fifty pages and leaves the questions in the reader's mind: was there enough in Bickerton's life to justify a fuller treatment, or was even as much needed?

The answer to both questions depends on one's attitude to the theory of 'Partial Impact', by which Bickerton claimed to explain the occurrence not only of 'new stars' (novae) but the whole cosmic system as well. Is this an 'elaborate theory', as claimed on the dust cover or is it merely an idea which its originator failed to develop into a scientific theory? Mr Burdon does not seem to have made up his mind about this. He indicates what the theory is and describes its reception in New Zealand and overseas, both in scientific and lay circles, but leaves the reader to decide for himself, with no real evidence to guide him. But that is just what Bickerton did, so his biographer may be justified. A reviewer can be less cautious. 'Partial Impact' is an idea which its inventor asked to bear too large a burden.

The idea is described as follows (Chapter 3).

'If two of the numberless large dark bodies moving through space should come within the influence of each other's gravitation they

would be attracted out of their courses with a constantly increasing velocity. One of three things would then happen. They would pass each other by, collide centre to centre, or what was far more likely, strike each other a glancing blow. In this last event a piece would be struck off each colliding mass, and these two pieces, having developed a high degree of heat, would coalesce and form a new star of remarkable brilliance, while the remaining two bodies, or "wounded stars", might be expected to travel on through space unless the coalesced or "third body" were sufficiently large to attract them back to collide again.' Bickerton sent fifteen letters to the scientific periodical *Nature*, which refused to publish them. Reading them today, nearly eighty years later, one can only conclude that the editor had a good case for his decision. Freedom of publication is all important in science, but it involves responsibility. Bickerton's speculations led to no deductions or predictions which could be put to the test of observation. Their very generality was a weakness, not a strength.

It was however, no doubt the apparent comprehensiveness of the idea which attracted the considerable amount of lay support, not only in New Zealand. Moreover speculation about origins, following Darwin's insight into historical biology and geology, was rampant and exciting. Indeed it has not lost its attraction in this era of radio broadcasting. Perhaps there was something exciting too in the spectacle of the intellectual rebel proclaiming 'the truth' against the apathy of the 'orthodox scientists'. Orthodoxy is not always right; nor is it always wrong, in any branch of human affairs. Bickerton's theory was of such a nature that it will always be possible to claim that he 'anticipated So-and-So'. This does not make it an adequate theory for science.

While Mr Burdon is hardly successful in bringing his Scholar to life, there is something very attractive about him. 'I cannot hate', he wrote to the Canterbury College Board of Governors at the time of his dismissal and that must awake sympathy fifty years later, when hatred is a slow poison among men. If not a great scientist, he was a great character, and a professor in the tradition of fiction. In these days when it is impossible to distinguish professors from other professional groups, and one professional group from another, the Bickertons of the academic world seem to have vanished. I think we have lost something.

H. N. Parton

NEW ZEALAND NOW. Oliver Duff. Second edition. *Allen & Unwin; Paul's Book Arcade.* 12s. 6d.

THIS book first appeared in 1941 as one of the Centennial Surveys published by the Department of Internal Affairs. It was one of the

slighter contributions to that admirable series, but (or and?) apparently one of the most popular. Is there any good reason, one naturally asks, for republishing it now, fifteen years later? Already one rather peevish reviewer has suggested that the book is not only out of date now, but was in many ways out of date even in 1941. It would have been far better, he added, to publish in book form some of the more penetrating studies by younger men which have appeared since.

It is true that, although the dust-jacket speaks of 'a new preface and a postscript', both of these are very brief and make no attempt at all either to add or to amend. There seems no reason why at least the second chapter, which presents various facts and figures taken from the *Year-book*, should not have been revised. In 1956 the unwary reader may well be misled by such statements as that the average New Zealander earns between £4 and £6 a week. But, apart from this chapter, it seems likely that most of Mr Duff's comments still apply. One suspects, indeed, that the reviewer's real complaint is not so much that the book's material is out-dated, as that the form in which it is presented is out-moded.

For (in some circles at least) the modish way to write about a nation and its way of life is the neo-Freudian. We have become accustomed to the odd mixture of styles which results: the pedantic documentation followed by the incautious generalization, the flights of rhetorical, rhythmic prose when the author tries to show what a 'cultural pattern' looks like from the inside, the quick change to semi-medical jargon when the time has come to explain rather than describe.

Mr Duff belongs to an older tradition. He has been influenced not by the scientific treatise but by the literary essay, with its apt allusions (preferably from the Bible), its touch of whimsy, its occasional strictly rationed allowance of robust sentiment. He prefers the personal anecdote to the statistical survey; indeed, when he comes to use the *Year-book*, he shows some embarrassment, obviously feeling that these naked figures are hardly fit reading for gentlemen: they need to be dressed up. And so he dresses them up, first of all with an amusing little disquisition on the *Year-book* itself ('our best known, most frequently consulted, most eloquent, and in many ways most original book, a book that robs Mass Observation of its novelty and most of its nonsense') and then with a playful account of the average New Zealander.

When allowance is made for the difference in style and in pretentiousness, the actual picture of New Zealand life which Mr Duff gives us is not very different from that of the more earnest investigators. He comments on the New Zealander's distrust of the intellect, his parochialism, his respectability, his Puritanism, his conservatism (it is only 'superficial observers' Mr Duff says, 'who call us a radical community'), his sober-sidedness, his 'aesthetic in-

articulateness'. But it would never occur to Mr Duff to seek an explanation of these peculiarities by investigating, for example, the age at which we are normally weaned. When he does look for causes, he remembers the fashion before the last, and talks about the way in which character is affected by climate. For this is, after all, an essay and not a treatise; and one feels that the author is amusing himself with a fancy rather than propounding a theory. His more usual method is to take some fairly obvious point and to weave a neat pattern of words round it.

In some ways, then, the great merit of this book is that you don't need to take it too seriously. You can enjoy Mr Duff's wit and common sense; and on the very few occasions when he becomes fatuous ('countries which neglect racehorses usually neglect liberty too') you can console yourself with the thought that he doesn't really mean it. It is a little harder to overlook the occasional solemn organ-notes, most of them touched off by the war. ('Many things will come to New Zealand during the next hundred years and many things pass away. But liberty will not pass away while our grandchildren can spell Olympus.') But on the whole this book was worth reprinting, as an entertaining, if not especially profound essay that says neatly at least some of the things that can safely be said about New Zealand.

D. H. Monro

ANCIENT VOYAGERS IN THE PACIFIC. Andrew Sharp. *Polynesian Society, Wellington.* 30s.

NEW ZEALAND and the Polynesian Islands occupy an immense triangle suspended in the middle of the world's greatest ocean, thousands of miles distant from either the Asiatic or American coastlines. The Polynesians who occupied them in some distant past were still in the age of stone and, of course, had no compass or instruments of navigation to guide their canoes. Because the Polynesians found their way to every habitable island, which we now know to exist in the Polynesian triangle, they have rightfully been considered among the greatest seafarers of all time.

However the chief purpose of Andrew Sharp's book is to rescue the real achievements of the Polynesian and other stone age Pacific seafarers from the over-extravagant claims of European scholars, such as Fornander of Hawaii and Percy Smith of New Zealand sixty to eighty years ago. Andrew Sharp calls these writers traditionalists because they based their case on the over plausible and detailed traditions of ancestral canoe voyagings, which were told to them long after the narrators knew from European maps the

position of every island in the Pacific. They succeeded in creating a legend of Polynesian navigation which later students have tended to follow rather unthinkingly.

The legend, in brief, is of ancestral canoe captains deliberately ranging the ocean to discover islands and then returning unerringly to their starting point to fit out organized expeditions to settle the new lands. In New Zealand, for instance, we have the legend of Kupe making the first discovery and returning to Hawaiki to hand down the sailing directions from which in later generations Toi and the Maori Fleet embarked women, children and food to settle a land they had only heard of.

The author of *Ancient Voyagers in the Pacific* dismisses this possibility by drawing attention to the obvious limitations of navigation without instruments when the pilots had only the sun, the stars and the set of winds and currents to guide them. Regarding the post European traditions with suspicion he decided to go back to the observations, which Cook and the European voyagers were able to make on Polynesian canoe voyaging before it disappeared through the influence of Western ships and methods. Although in the late seventeen hundreds the Tongans in the west and the Tahitians further east were still making regular voyages out of sight of land, in each case they operated on a short island-hopping circuit in which no sea gap was greater than three hundred miles. Even then canoes were continually losing their way completely when cloud obscured the stars or the sun, and when the wind blew up from an unexpected quarter. When the castaways were heard of again it was through the accident of fetching up on another island of whose existence they often had no previous idea. I have read somewhere else indeed that the Tahitians were so aware of the problem of losing course that on any except a short voyage offshore they made sure that the canoe included at least one woman and a sow in pig.

Looking critically at the formidable list of islands given by the Tahitians in particular to Cook's officers, Andrew Sharp comes to the conclusion that only a few were on the regular sailing routes while the majority were known of from the existence of castaways who had been blown away from them but were unable to make their way back. Where the distance was too great for this sort of accident to happen the Tahitians had no knowledge of the existence of groups such as Hawaii, Easter Island and New Zealand. He suggests that such groups were originally settled by castaways who had miraculously survived an unusually long drift, a one-way voyage in fact from which no survivors ever returned to the central islands to bring back news of their new landfall.

Turning next to the traditions of these remote groups the author claims that, before European students put the ideas in their heads, the native story tellers had no real conception that their ancestors

arrived in mundane canoe voyages but rode there on the backs of whales or birds or other supernatural means.

This in brief is the thesis of one of the most important books yet published on the pre-European voyages of the South seas. The thesis is that the Polynesians found their island homes as the accidental result of one-way voyages from which they could only rarely find their way back. Although the idea of the drift voyage has always been seriously considered as an alternative to the two-way voyage of discovery, Andrew Sharp's book reminds us how insidiously over the years we have come to accept the Percy Smith and Fornander voyages of discovery almost as a dogma. He challenges us to look into the rather shaky basis for this belief.

As a student of Polynesian cultural history I can go along happily with the author to this point, namely his emphasis on the theoretical difficulties of purposive voyages of discovery, his insistence on the inevitability of drift voyages at all periods of Polynesian expansion into their present triangle. However he goes further than this, he offers drift voyages as the only method of island discovery and settlement.

It is not difficult to make out a strong case against drift as the only and exclusive mechanism. If we follow orthodox theory and accept South-east Asia as the homeland of the proto-Polynesians, no accumulation of involuntary drift voyages, against winds blowing predominantly from the east, could have brought them to their present archipelago suspended in the void of the mid-Pacific. We must assume not only canoes capable of beating into the wind, but the desire to beat eastward in canoes provisioned with plants and animals in the confident expectation of stocking new islands.

Returning to the evidence of only limited voyaging practised by the Polynesians in Cook's time, the author seems unable to consider the possibility that the art of an earlier golden age of deep sea voyaging could have become progressively lost. In the Society Islands for instance the islands regularly visited on a limited island hopping circuit were only a fraction of those known to chief Tupaea of Raiatea. By critical study of the chart recording Tupaea's list, Mr Sharp has managed for the first time to resolve the earlier confusion and identify the groups in terms of present geography. The impressive fact from his elucidation is that the list covers the whole of Eastern Polynesia, with the exception of Hawaii, New Zealand and Easter Island; in Western Polynesia, Samoa, Rotuma, Niue and perhaps the Lau group off Fiji can be identified. It is not the whole explanation, as Mr Sharp suggests, to regard Tupaea's knowledge of the majority he had never visited, as the accumulation of castaways' tales from contemporary drift voyages. It seems equally plausible to regard this incredible scatter of islands as the shrinking traditional circle of an earlier even wider knowledge. All memory of Hawaii, Easter Island and New Zealand

had been lost, because, once the age of long distance voyaging passed, no drift canoe could ever come back to remind central Polynesia of their existence.

The key to the whole problem should certainly be found in the relationship of these outer peripheral groups of the vast Eastern Polynesian cultural area. Although it might be begging the question to doubt whether drift voyagers would ever have reached them in the first place, the acclimatization of the whole gamut of cultivated plants and animals in Hawaii, the dog and five important plants in New Zealand, and all save the pig in Easter Island, suggests deliberate and purposive voyages of settlement at some stage.

There is also internal evidence from such durable artifacts as the stone adze that the adze fashions of these outlying groups were diffused simultaneously from Tahiti over six hundred years ago. Since then there has been no evidence, traditional or cultural, of later contacts to or from the dispersal centre. Had blind chance and drift been the only operative factors, odd canoes would have fetched up on these remote peripheral groups throughout the pre-European occupation.

Like Heyerdahl who found a probable back door to Polynesia from the Pacific Coast of America, and then wrote a huge book to prove it was the only door, Mr Sharp's enthusiasm for the drift voyage has carried him so far that he would deny any deliberate two-way voyage. As usual the truth is likely to lie between the two propositions. Meanwhile he throws down his challenge to the supporters of the discovery theory to present a similarly plausible and well-argued case on their side.

Roger Duff

Correspondence

To The Editor

Sir: In common with other reviewers, R. A. Copland in the September issue of *Landfall* seems to have done less than justice to Dan Davin's novel *The Sullen Bell*. Grudgingly admitting that technically it is Davin's best work yet, Mr Copland finds fault with the narrative device of the omniscient author, the likeness of the central character to Mr Davin himself, the care with which the author has built up the atmosphere of post-war London, the neatness with which narrative, interior monologue and dialogue carry on the story, and the immaturity revealed by those characters who commit themselves to generalization.

To deal with the last point first: surely one of the chief points about the character Mr Copland mentions—Bill—is that funda-

mental immaturity which results in his putting an end to his own life. For an example to the contrary, what about Hugh's sober backward glance, as he looks at the tinted photographs of New Zealand bush on the walls of New Zealand House:— 'He hadn't known then that time does not pass like a stream, persisting behind itself, but like a fire, blackening.' Each of these examples is fully motivated by character; and so is the rest of the dialogue.

Hugh is certainly the most mature character, but one cannot agree when Mr Copland suggests that the novelist would have gained from 'the integration which might have resulted from limiting his vision to, say, that of Hugh'. To have adopted this method would have deprived the novel's pattern of much of its variety and tension. Mr Copland admits that 'the plotting is rather more workmanlike than before'. This is lukewarm praise: I would go further, and say that the construction is masterly.

The fact that Hugh's career is modelled on Davin's own makes Mr Copland ask 'Does he regard this as the only recipe for a New Zealand hero?'—a question to which one might reply 'Not necessarily; but it is, after all, the classic recipe, and one which could be applied to the overwhelming majority of eminent New Zealanders abroad.'

As for quarrelling with 'the legerdemain by which the author documents the paving stones without letting on he is doing so', a good deal of the power generated by the book (and I think most would agree that it has real power) comes from the brilliant evocation of the scene in post-war London. This is done without sentiment, and with a true sense of the complexity and uniqueness of that atmosphere; and it is the more effective from being glimpsed through New Zealand eyes. I suggest that anything but Mr Davin's carefully elaborated setting would not have succeeded here, and that authenticity, so far from 'lying upon the book with a weight like Lofty Blomfield's', is a keen weapon in Mr Davin's armoury.

It is profitless to condemn a writer for using the facts of his own life as raw material, or for using a complex and somewhat recherché technique in telling his story, or for failing to load his dialogue with gems of philosophical insight. Are the personal facts as related significant? Is the technique obtrusive? Does what the characters say illuminate their own problem and advance the story? These rather are surely the relevant questions.

In *The Sullen Bell* Dan Davin has not written 'an inferior form of fiction'. He has taken a profound and poignant theme, one with which he is uniquely equipped to deal; that theme he has clothed in a story skilfully developed, enriched with a variety of entirely believable characters, and, to one reader anyway, resonant with undertones of emotion and image which make it a considerable achievement.

Paul Day

SIR: The final effect of C. K. Stead's review of the poetry of Charles Doyle in the December *Landfall* is something like an out-of-breath race commentary. And even if he shouts the result clearly enough, we are by no means clear how he got there. I wouldn't deny that some of Mr Stead's criticism, scattered here and there among the quotations, is both wise and penetrating; but I would certainly challenge some of his assumptions.

Most of the second half of Doyle's long sequence 'A Splinter of Glass' seems to Mr Stead an 'inflation of a relatively commonplace experience—that of adjustment in a new land'. Very well; but here, I feel, Mr Stead displays a certain lack of critical insight in the large view by neglecting to add that because of Doyle's quiet exploration of this material he has with reasonable success broken in new and difficult themes in New Zealand verse; and has certainly emerged as a distinctive voice among our younger poets. We learn little of the real nature of Doyle's work from Mr Stead's review. And if the problem of adjustment in a new land is a relatively commonplace experience, something not to be inflated beyond the commonplace, then the way is clear for Mr Stead to dismiss a good deal of New Zealand verse. Of course Mr Stead can reply that Doyle's adjustment is a personal one, and not to be considered in the same light as the larger themes which occur in the work of, say, Curnow and Brasch; but I would suggest that poetry necessarily begins from a personal level, whether the personality intrudes (as in the case of immigrant Doyle) or no. Doyle is admittedly mining a thin vein here; but the ore is of the right colour, and that is the main thing. And wasn't it Yeats, after all, who said poetry should deal with the 'great commonplaces'? Heaven help us: what should we do if we forbade inflation of that relatively commonplace experience called love?

Again, Mr Stead has an annoying habit of plucking meaningless lines from meaningful context. For instance:

> I tossed away a handful of days, coins
> For the beggar Time

Now Mr Stead does not see this as valid; Time, he assures us, is a tyrant, not a beggar. But read in context it is surely clear, even to the most unperceptive, that Time in this instance is quite certainly a beggar: in another instance it could quite easily be a tyrant. In any case, if Doyle chose to see Time as a jack-in-a-box, then that would be his business, his own personal view to which he is, as a poet, entitled: and it would hardly be for Mr Stead to question it.

With the established Alistair Campbell Mr Stead's approach changes. The quotations are gone. Instead he conscientiously lists Campbell's abstract nouns, adjectives and Tennysonian participles, and points out the dangers in their use; but finally admits in a grudging tone that the result is often 'clear and hard'. And where,

precisely, does that leave us? With the fact that Campbell succeeds as a poet in an individual way. Yet Mr Stead, neglecting his own critical finding, gives Campbell no credit for his feat of conjuring fresh meaning from tired words that present obvious dangers to the poet. (Instead we are told: 'Campbell does not use his poetic words in any individual or surprising way.')

And it is a pity that Mr Stead allowed a sour note to creep into his review with his jibe at Campbell's three editions. He claims he does not wish 'to belittle Mr Campbell's very obvious talent'; yet in the same breath he remarks: 'It may be that to the average educated reader interested in local poetry, this bright array is such stuff as poems are made on.' Here we must despair for Mr Stead. He might just as well have added, while he was at it, that a majority of interested critics here and overseas also see this 'bright array' as poetry.

It would have been just as pointless in forming an assessment of Campbell's work.

Maurice Shadbolt

NEW CONTRIBUTORS

Roger Oppenheim. Born 1931 in Wellington. School teacher in Auckland and part-time student at Auckland University College. Specific interests, anthropology and the Maori. A Sunday poet and amateur of almost anything.

H. N. Parton. Born in Masterton 1906; educated at Christchurch Boys' High School, Canterbury University College. and King's College, London; successively lecturer and associate professor, Canterbury University College, and since 1954 professor of chemistry, Otago University.

J. M. Thomson. Born in Blenheim 1926, educated at Nelson College, Victoria University College, and University College, London. Service with R.N.Z.N., 1944-6. Co-founder and editor of *Hilltop* in 1949. Plays the flute and piano and has written about music. Employed on the *N.Z. Listener.*

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

Land of the Morning Calm. A Diary of Summer Days in Korea. Rewi Alley. (Desunt caetera.)

The Use of Stitched Binders in the Maintenance and Repair of Library Books. T. T. Bond. With an appendix on the development of library services in New Zealand by Wynne Colgan. Bayard Book Co., Roseberry Avenue, Highbury, Auckland N.5. 12s. 6d.

The Whirinaki Valley. Nancy Ellison. Paul's Book Arcade. 12s. 6d.

The Golden Years. Roderick Finlayson. A Primary School Bulletin. Forms I and II. Wellington: Education Department, School Publications Branch.

Love in a Lighthouse. G. R. Gilbert. The Pegasus Press. 12s. 6d.

Apocalypse in Springtime and other poems. Lex Banning. Edwards and Shaw. 10s. 6d.

The Miracle of Mullion Hill. David Campbell. Angus and Robertson. 15s.

Roaming Round New Zealand. Frank Clune. Angus and Robertson. 25s.

Such is Life. Tom Collins. Angus and Robertson. 25s.

The Occupying Power. Gwyn Griffin. Angus and Robertson. 18s. 9d.

A Vision of Ceremony. James McAuley. Angus and Robertson. 15s.

The Drums Go Bang. Ruth Park and D'Arcy Niland. Angus and Robertson. 16s.

Anywhere but Here. Peter Pinney. Angus and Robertson. 21s.

The Hexagon. Hal Porter. Angus and Robertson. 15s.

The Feathered Serpent. Roland Robinson. Edwards and Shaw. 30s.

A Train to Catch. Anthony Rushworth. Angus and Robertson. 16s.

The Country Upstairs. Colin Simpson. Angus and Robertson. 25s.

Look Back In Anger. John Osborne. Faber and Faber. 10s. 6d.

Modern English and American Poetry. Margaret Schlauch. Watts. 21s.

Why I came and other poems. Justo P. Tolentino. Manila, 1954.

Des Erdballs letztes Inselriff. Deutsche erleben Neuseeland. John Asher. Munich: Max Hueber Verlag. 1956.

Mitteilungen. January-February 1956. Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen. Stuttgart, Charlottenplatz 17. (A N.Z. number).

The Paris Review. Edited by George A. Plimpton and others. Spring 1956. Vol. IV. No. 12. 2 Columbus Circle, New York 19. Quarterly. 16s. p.a. 4s. a copy.

I-Wen (Foreign Literature). No. 10, 1956. Peking: Chinese Writers' Union.

Notes

THREE of A. R. D. Fairburn's books will probably be read as long as verse is highly regarded in New Zealand—*Dominion*, *Strange Rendezvous*, and *Three Poems*. And it will not be strange if *The Sky is a Limpet* has a life as long as men's memories of the first Labour Government. For the immediate future, New Zealand will be the poorer for the loss of a controversialist, a student of the fine arts, a raconteur—a man who could bring a civilized intelligence to bear upon a variety of issues. But for a long time New Zealand will be the richer for the life of a poet whose work embraced a great deal of the experience and character of the country.

All his activities—the poetry, the polemic, the conversation, the exploration of visual arts—proceeded from a whole personality. Art, politics, people and ideas had their centre, their point of union, in a single human existence and its predicament. They are firmly rooted at the heart of his poems. His most important poems show two things very clearly: first that here was a man to whom people were supremely important, whether as friends or enemies, as individuals or a community; and second, that to this poet verse was a way of thinking, not simply a repository for feelings, moods, vague and ill-realized aspirations. 'To a Friend in the Wilderness', perhaps his finest work and probably the best long poem yet written in New Zealand, is a various and many-sided poem which exemplifies both his concern with people—his hatreds and his loves—and his ease among ideas. Here, thought becomes passionate; mind and heart move in an exact dialectic.

Strikingly—in a country whose poets not uncommonly decline in stature as they leave the excitements of adolescence behind—his ability as a poet increased with his age. His impulse to verse was not exhausted by the ardours and frustrations of the awakening of sexual love. He was, of course, a profound and passionate explorer of those concealed empires of sense; but he was not imprisoned within their walls. Wit, humour, ribaldry, a zest for people and for ideas, preserved him from the decline that too often accompanies the exhaustion of the initial impulse to celebrate and convey. He was almost unique in New Zealand in his ability to write as convincingly of the love of friendship as of the love between men and women.

All those who have a concern for the arts in New Zealand, who

relish a strong draught of irreverent and pointed criticism of her political, social, and cultural life, who delight in verse designed by an active mind for an eloquent voice, have reason to regret the death of A. R. D. Fairburn.

W.H.O.

RUTH FRANCE

The Race

(from a novel)

EVEN after the tearing of the mizzen Alan had not lost heart. The storm jib was useless, needing the mizzen for balance, but trysail or mainsail could be set amidships, and they could manage nicely. The only difficulty would be in coming about, but they could wear round. That would mean a good look-out for the coast, in order not to leave themselves too little room. In this thick weather that was a worry, but with care they would make it.

He could not contemplate changing their plans. Laurie had urged for more sea-room, and even Bob and Pete would have liked to get away from the coast, for a breathing space. They were dispirited. Con was beyond feeling anything. He had become an automaton.

But any change in plan, felt Alan, required adjustment. Their only hope for the race remained in carrying through as they had intended. He was not yet ready to give up the race. Things were not as bad as that.

They had stripped the torn mizzen, had bundled it below, and had reset the trysail. The disturbing thought now was how closely would Shadow reach into the wind? The only thing to do was to plug on, and see. At least she was riding better, was not overpressed. That dreadful shuddering of the masts had been disturbing.

At dawn on Wednesday there was nothing to be seen. Nothing at all, save the heaving waste of water and the driving cloud. One looks for the dawn so eagerly, yet in fact there is little relief, even a new bleakness. Bob shivered. His legs were shaking with cold. Below his oilskin showed the white goose pimples. His hands though, looked raw, purplish.

'I'm cold, too,' said Alan. 'Take her a minute, Bob. I'm going below.'

He was soon back.

'They're not asleep. If Con could sleep in between he'd be better.'

'He's too tired now to sleep.'

'I didn't think of bringing sleeping pills.'

'They'd be no use for two hour watches.'

'But if Con were put out for a while it would make all the difference. He's useless as he is.'

'With luck we should get in tonight. We can manage without him.'

The thought of reaching home was like a warm beacon. The thought of being in harbour tonight, instead of in the dark tunnel of the seas, was the most comforting thing that had happened all the voyage. It was not impossible, Alan still thought. He didn't know where they were, but it was not impossible.

'The mizzen's a mess.'

It was indeed. The spreaders had driven a hole right through the canvas, which had then torn up and down. The task of disentangling the sail had been frightful. At one stage it appeared hopeless, and Bob had offered to climb the mast.

'Not yet,' said Alan. 'We'll get the blamed thing down, or I'll know the reason why.'

They had tugged, pulled and manoeuvred, and had torn the sail some more in the process, but had freed it from the spreaders. Then the metal clips had jammed in the tracks, and the sail was half way down, but would come no further. Bob made a flying leap, grabbed at the canvas with both hands, and his weight brought the whole thing down with such suddeness that he rolled in a heap to the deck, covered with threshing canvas. Since Shadow was pitching wildly, Bob's jump was rash, but was effective.

'Hey, Bob,' protested Alan, but his voice was lost in the cracking of canvas and the noise of the storm. Unless you were close beside a person he could not hear you. The wind whisked voices away as everything else. It was as though the words had actual shape and dimension, and were tumbled along like rattling little letters out of a child's playbox.

Laurie unhooked the metal clips from the boom, pushed the protesting sail into the cockpit. Con still sat where he had fallen after letting the sheet adrift. He sat there until all was tidied, the sail stowed below, and Laurie heaved and pushed him too below, as though he were inanimate. There he had remained ever since.

That was six hours ago. The cold dawn slowly suffused the grey cloud, lightened a little the black hollows of the seas.

'Perhaps,' said Bob, 'I could mend the mizzen. We're not much good without it.'

'It would be an awful job in this sea.'

'I could wedge in a corner of the wheelhouse. Where's the thread and palm?'

'Next the radio. In the cupboard. Leave it till later, Bob. She's sailing well. Seems to be pointing all right, according to the compass.'

'Depends on the current. Where we're getting, I mean.'

'If only,' said Alan, 'we could see something.'

That was their main trouble. All the time they were groping, blindly. Each time they had glimpsed the land, on coming about, it was a loom of hills, faint, unrecognizable. And now they could not go too close inshore, in any case. In such heavy seas Shadow would not come about without the jib and mizzen. They had to wear round away from the wind. They seemed to lose a lot of ground in doing so.

This was worrying Bob. Two hours out to sea, two hours in again added up to a number of turns. After all, they were supposed to be racing.

At seven Pete cooked them eggs and tomatoes. Nobody appreciated the meal, or Pete's efforts to serve it.

'It was meant to be fried eggs,' he said, 'but they scrambled themselves, and I don't blinkin' well wonder.'

'Has Con had any?' Alan pushed the meal down, though he didn't want it.

'He won't eat anything. Just lying there.'

Alan left the wheel to Bob, swung down below. Con lay flat on his back on the deck, eyes closed.

'Do you want some eggs?'

There was no answer. Alan shook him.

'Con, can't you eat?'

'No.' He did not open his eyes.

'Can you drink? Shall I fetch some tea?'

'No.'

'Have you slept?'

'No.'

Alan surveyed him anxiously. Con's face was grey. There was nothing he could do, however, and Alan turned his attention to Laurie, who was seated on Pete's bunk, drinking tea.

'You all right, Laurie?'

'I'm O.K.'

'You'd better help Bob for a little. I'll have a rest, then relieve Bob.'

'O.K. skipper.'

Laurie climbed into the cockpit.

'I'll take her, Bob.'

'Thanks.' Bob moved along the bench.

'God, wouldn't it be nice to enjoy a smoke!'

'Don't!' said Bob. At the thought of it he retched.

'Sorry.' Laurie at once felt uneasy. He felt he had a genius for the wrong gesture. And Bob was hard to talk to, at any time. Though he and Alan seemed to get along together.

It was a funny thing, though, he found after a while, with Bob beside him he was more at ease with the ship. Perhaps because he knew Bob often sailed in her, and was at home with what he was doing. It was easier, certainly, without the worry of Con upon his shoulders, and he was able to give himself to the steering.

'It's certainly easier work, with only the trysail.'

'But we're not getting anywhere,' said Bob.

'Neither is anyone else, I should think.'

'That's no reason—' Bob broke off. Funny, thought Laurie. He never shows emotion. He keeps it all in.

Later Alan came to relieve him. They heard Bob at the radio, then he came back to the wheelhouse. He had the heavy thread, the curved needle, and the leather palm.

'Get through all right? To Christchurch?' said Alan.

'O.K.'

'Any news?'

'Nothing much. Some of the yachts went back to Wellington. Don't know which ones. I'll have another go at lunch time.'

'Look, Bob, get some rest. Don't worry about that.'

'I'm all right.'

But he wasn't. Before he had the sail pulled out—a difficult job, for it was as stiff as cardboard—he had to fetch a bucket to put beside him. Pete came and helped him with the heavy folds of the sails, and at last they found the torn holes in the mizzen.

'How's he going to mend that?' said Laurie.

'Let him try,' said Alan.

Bob did try. With the greatest difficulty he pushed the needle through the unyielding wet canvas, stiff with salt and harder than cardboard. At times he had to give up, and rest, but for all of that day, when he wasn't at the wheel or at the radio, he was wrestling with the mending of the mizzen.

His effort put new life into Laurie, whose stomach was beginning to settle. He was actually looking forward to lunch, and helped Bob, when he was supposed to be resting, by holding out the folds of canvas. Each stitch had to be struggled with, needed several attempts in the making.

At twelve o'clock Bob said 'That's all for now. I've a sked.'

Laurie went out to Alan, sitting alone at the wheel. Alan was looking tired. His face had tightened up into folds in which the salt had collected like snow. The white powdering made him look older. His eyes were dark and sunken.

'I'll take her.' Laurie fell into place on the bench. It was difficult, when sitting, not to fall into place. And just at that moment a wave slapped into the counter, sending a slop in their laps. Alan rose, shaking it off. He stood just abaft the wheelhouse, hanging on, peering out into the grey void. But there was nothing to be seen.

'Will you be all right, Laurie, if I lie down in the wheelhouse? You can easily give me a yell.'

'I'm jake, skipper. You have a rest.'

Indeed Laurie was feeling more sure of himself. Though any yell to Alan would be whisked away on the wind, the thought of being alone did not worry him. The yacht, though pressed, was riding well, and, now more confident, he could keep her sailing. When on his own, too, he found he could think of other things. Not much, because he was determined not to let his attention wander, but even in the turmoil of smashing seas and high-pitched whining he could think, a little, of Beatrice.

It was a warm thought. Without having come to any decision, he knew now that he would ask Beatrice to marry him. He was surprised at the ease of it, now that the knowledge was certain. He wondered why he had been hesitating.

The upper half of the hatchway was open, and he saw Bob come to Alan, then only his back as he bent over him. After a while Bob straightened up, climbed into the cockpit, and came to tell him, with difficulty because of the screaming wind, that Hongi had been wrecked on the Wellington coast, and that another yacht was dismasted off Kaikoura.

In spite of the bad news they all ate some lunch. They were recovering from seasickness, and with that past they felt too that the voyage was nearly over. All except Con. Con still lay like a log, would not eat, apparently did not sleep, because he would answer, but without opening his eyes. All they could do was to leave him there.

They began to show each other their bumps and bruises. They were stiff and sore, and highly coloured where they had bumped themselves. Their eyes were bloodshot with the salt and with lack of sleep.

The loss of Hongi did not affect them as much as it might have done. It is impossible to believe, at the point, that disaster may happen to oneself. To others, maybe, but never to oneself. That is how one withstands hardship.

During the afternoon they took it in turns to rest. Bob, whenever possible, stuck to his sail mending. His stoic endurance roused awe in Laurie, and an old affection in Alan. Bob, as always, would never give up.

Alan himself was becoming very weary. O to lie for just one hour, just one, in a place that did not move. He thought longingly of a bed of rock, good solid rock. At the top of a mountain, if need be, but rock, solid and permanent.

The afternoon wore on. The time passed quickly, perhaps because of the constant movement. At four o'clock they caught the loom of the land, wore round, and again set out to sea. Laurie took the wheel alone while Bob went on with his stitching. But after a while Bob gave it up, came and sat beside him. His hands were stiff and sore, and he flexed them gently.

'How's it going?'

'Should finish it to-night. Boy, do we need it!'

They both knew how badly they needed more driving power. They knew that, at the last glimpse of land, they were still on the hilly coast south of Kaikoura. They were not yet within Pegasus Bay. The knowledge had blasted the faint rising of spirits they had felt earlier. No word had been uttered, but they all knew where they were, and knew that another night, perhaps more, of this intolerable journey lay before them.

Alan had gone below without a word. He knew now, without a doubt, that they were making no headway, perhaps were losing ground. His responsibility, now, was to make a decision.

He lay for a while, thinking it over. To run back to Wellington, now, seemed hardly possible. Cook Strait would be an inferno. The loss of Hongi was too quick in the mind for him to attempt it. To get under the shelter of Cape Campbell, even, meant entering the strait, and he knew the turbulent rips they would encounter. Besides, of what actual degree of shelter there was under the cape he wasn't certain. Kaikoura, too, was a difficult anchorage. The fishermen, he was sure, would be keeping watch, and would guide them in, but to enter the harbour might mean using the engine.

Strange, even though the voyage was becoming a matter of life and death, Alan, except in the very last resort, would not consider giving up the race and using the engine.

There were two alternatives. Either to keep beating as they were, with the hope of at least maintaining position, or to run before the storm, giving the land a wide berth, and continuing up the east coast of the North Island. Without the mizzen they could not, to any practical effect, heave to. Besides, at present they had not sufficient sea-room to allow for drift.

Alan's own inclination was to keep going. That, however, would mean they must, somehow, rouse Con. They needed him. Unless he were really ill he must be somewhat rested. Firmness, even a little brutal treatment, might be called for.

At five o'clock Alan got up, took the wheel and told the others to talk it over. He would abide by a majority, with the right of a deciding vote.

Pete, Bob and Laurie clustered in the wheelhouse. Bob was braced in a corner, still at his interminable job of mending the mizzen.

'What's the use of turning back?' said Pete. 'We've got to get home some time. Might as well do it now.'

'The only thing about turning back is it might be more comfortable.'

'Nothing is comfortable in this weather,' said Bob. He wriggled, pushed and manoeuvred the needle through the thick canvas. Laurie, watching Bob's endurance, felt reproached.

'I'm willing to go on. We might as well see the thing through.'

All the same, he thought a little regretfully, it might have been nice to have the ship more upright for a while. It would have given them a rest. Though perhaps not. Running before the wind she would have rolled horribly.

He too was thinking with longing of something solid beneath his feet.

'I think I'll take up mountaineering.'

'Mountaineering my foot. Give me something softer to fall on.'

'Water's not soft, though. It's damned hard.'

'It's softer than a ruddy great bed of rocks a thousand feet below. Not for me, thanks,' said Pete.

'Is it settled then?' said Bob. 'We all want to go on?'

'What about Con?'

'It hardly matters. We're three to one. And Alan wants to go on.'

'I'll tell him,' said Laurie. Then paused. 'How about getting out to sea? D'you think it's worth a trial?'

'It might be. We're losing too much ground in wearing round so often. And it's dangerous on the gear.'

'As for me,' said Pete, 'I might sleep sounder in my sodden bunk which everyone uses if I weren't wondering when we were going to hit the blasted cliffs. Give the skipper my compliments and a request for a breather.'

Laurie climbed into the cockpit, fell beside Alan. Alan's face looked pinched and grey. His mouth twitched a little.

'The others want to go on. We all do.' Laurie had to shout at him. Alan nodded.

'But we'd like more room. We'd like to get out to sea.'

Alan's face became a rock, the eyes like flint.

'If we go on, we go on my way.'

Laurie was at a loss for words. At last, 'O.K.'

'Tell them to come out here.'

They came out in a surprised manner. Pete, too, swaggering a little, and Bob looking troubled. They crouched on the benches as closely as they could to Alan. The stern heaved up, fell sideways, and water slapped over them all. Pete shook himself in disgust, but the others were so used to it they did not bother.

Then Alan told them, shouting, what they would do. To shout was the only way to be heard, but wherever he was Alan would have shouted. He told them that they would bring the ship to port, and bring it as he told them. At six o'clock they would start again on two hour watches, to get some rest between times. At six o'clock Laurie and Con would take over, and before that Con would be roused, and fed, if necessary by force, and got in a condition to help, by God, and they would all see to it.

There was a lot more, during which they sat in uncomfortable silence. When he had finished Alan was shaking.

'Look, skipper,' said Pete, 'I can take Con's place. That might be better.'

'You,' said Alan, still shaking, 'will do what you are here for. To cook, and keep order below. You can start right now by heating some soup and feeding it into Con. Laurie will go to bed. Bob will stay with me.'

'Aye,' said Pete, and hauled himself up, and through the hatchway. Every line of his jersey clad back expressed resentment. Laurie slid after him. He looked as though he were trying to make himself as small as possible.

In passing through the wheelhouse he automatically tapped the glass. They all did, every time they passed it. This time, unbelievably, it jumped. It was a moment before the knowledge broke

through. Then Laurie turned, leaned through the hatchway, and screamed, 'Hey, skipper, the glass is rising! It's up!'

Alan was too exhausted by his outburst to move. He sat there, guiding the wheel as though by instinct. He was not consciously thinking of what he was doing. Laurie's words, torn to tatters by the wind, formed gradually in his mind, also, it seemed, by instinct. At first they might have been spoken in a unknown language, but slowly the words fell into place, took form and meaning. But only by the brightening of Alan's eyes did he acknowledge the message.

Bob sat beside him. He was deliberating. He did not want to provoke another outburst, yet it seemed absurd—he knew that Alan was so tired that his mind was slow, could not encompass, perhaps, the whole picture. Alan was slumped beside the wheel, his shoulders rounded, chin almost upon his breast. Water seeped down his face, dripped at intervals from the salty stubble. He was too tired to wipe it away.

'She'll blow herself out. now.' said Bob at last.

'But it's too late. May take three days.'

'All the more reason—' Bob fumbled. 'Look. I've nearly finished the mizzen. I could have it done by six. It would make such a difference.'

Alan did not speak for a while.

'Think she will carry more? It's blowing harder.'

'We could always stow the trysail. Under jib and mizzen she would come about. No need to wear round.'

'Storm jib, remember. It's all we've got. She may not do it.'

'Hell, give it a try!'

'All right,' said Alan, mildly enough. He was too tired now to take offence. 'Finish it then. I can manage till six. But a lot depends on what Con and Laurie can cope with.'

Bob disappeared as fast as he was able. But the upper half of the hatchway was always open, and Alan could see Bob's head bent over his task, with every now and again a quick look out to see that Alan did not need him.

Alan could not help being touched, in spite of his irritation. And he was pleased to be alone for a little while. The effort of talking even to Bob, in the face of his overwhelming tiredness and the storm that beat one's words about one's ears, was something that in ordinary times he would not have believed. Yet in spite of everything his faith in his ship, and in himself, was unbroken. Men were apt to fall down, he knew, even the best of them, but from now on any of his crew who fell down would get up again. He would see to it.

At the same time Laurie, lying in the devilish discomfort of his bunk in the bow, was wondering, can't he see anyone else? What's the use of dragging Con out? He's no use. And I'm better without him. He makes me nervous.

I'm supposed, thought Laurie wildly, to be resting. Resting! Now look, he told himself, this won't do. You know how to relax. Then do it. Breathe in. Count four. Breathe out. Completely. Sink through the mattress.

That was difficult—to sink through the mattress—when every muscle must be tensed to stay upon it. But it gave him something to do. Trying to relax, or counting sheep, what was the difference?

But soon, please God, it would be over. The glass was rising. Another day, perhaps, and they would be home, and it would be all over. All over, as Laurie knew, until the next time. For as much as he told himself that this time was the last, that he could not face another journey, with the inevitable storm at some point of it, he knew that once the danger was past he would forget the discomfort, and remember the satisfaction only of having achieved an objective.

He knew he was not yet finished in the sense that Con was. Don't let me get like that, he prayed. Let me have the sense to know before I set out. Let me carry through with what I have to.

Because we never believe that we ourselves will fail, Laurie felt comforted. Just a little more at ease with himself. Because he was very tired, he dozed.

He woke with a sense of shock that was physical. An impact that sent him half out of his bunk, and, with the next lurch of the yacht, to his knees. For some moments he was utterly bewildered. His heart pounded. Then he began to sense that Shadow ploughed along as usual, that in spite of the noise of storm and water there was no hint of calamity. When he could contain himself he pulled himself up, peered aft along the saloon to where Pete's black head bobbed over the bulkhead. He was preparing supper in the galley.

Laurie sat down on the tiny locker at the foot of the foremast. He leaned his head in his hands. He could have wept. Wept with relief. And also in alarm. Because those vivid dreams—they seldom —never—were without foundation.

He had dreamed—he could still feel the impact—that Shadow had crashed on the rocks.

He climbed back on his bunk, and lay there trembling. All the confidence he had felt was gone. He knew, and kept telling himself, that the dreams were always much worse than the fulfilment. That the reality was so twisted, sometimes, as to be unrecognizable,

at first. But there was always something that bound the two, and made the dream an unmistakable forerunner. There was always, at some point in the reality, the realization that this was in fact the dream, and as such had already happened.

Oh God! As though there weren't enough, already. Now this added burden would haunt him for the rest of the voyage. Why, thought Laurie in despair, should I be hag-ridden in this manner. Why me? Nobody else gets it.

How do I know they don't? Because they don't talk about it is no proof. I don't talk about it either.

In fact he had never mentioned it to anyone. He was afraid of ridicule. He was quite sure nobody else would experience these things, would think them a weakness. Imagine Alan. Imagine Pete or Alan with second sight. How they would hoot with laughter!

The only thing to do was to try to forget it. Put the dream right out of his mind. But that could only be done in action. Here he was lying in his bunk with the vividness of the occurrence like a film before him, and nothing, neither closing his eyes nor his mind, could entirely dismiss it.

If only he were anywhere, anywhere but in this blasted yacht! Here where, come what inescapably may, there was nothing to do but to take it.

Pete, in the galley, felt the same bottled up tension. Alan could let it out on his crew, but for Pete and Bob and Laurie there was no safety valve. Pete, in irritation, banged the pots on the hanging primuses, and scraped at the stew. Once he flicked a piece of potato over the bulwark at Con, who was sitting, blinking owlishly, on Pete's bunk. The potato fell in his hair, but Con did not notice it.

The lump of blubber, thought Pete, who had to haul him up, push and pummel and prod some semblance of life into him, and feed him with soup and tea, a spoonful at a time, much of it spilt and wasted, until Con appeared, if not active, at least as though he were alive, and not a corpse they were carrying. It's a cook I am, thought Pete indignantly, not a perishing baby-sitter! If I had my way I'd let him rot!

He was startled by the appearance of Laurie, who clawed his way aft.

'What's the matter with you, cook? Seen a ghost?'

'No,' said Laurie. He seemed uncertain. 'No. Is supper ready?'

'Soon. Don't say you're hungry, begob. Fancy getting out without being hauled out. Must be a record.'

'I was—I was restless.'

'Fancy!' said Pete tartly. 'Then you can make yourself useful.

Here,' he spooned some stew on a plate, handed it over. 'Feed that swob. I'm not going to.'

Laurie took it, sat down with Con. Con blinked at him, but said nothing. Laurie spooned up the stew, and Con sucked at it a little. Then he shook his head.

'No more,' he whispered.

'All right. You're feeling better, aren't you, Con?'

Con looked at him, but said nothing.

'Alan wants you to go outside. With me. We need you. But it's no use unless you're fit.'

'I'm fit.'

Laurie was not reassured. Con looked dreadful. The awful ball of apprehension in Laurie's chest grew tighter, a coil of rope that somebody was pulling tighter all the time, tighter, until, it seemed, it would strangle him entirely. To go on watch with Con, who was almost completely helpless, and with the knowledge of his dream, was something that Laurie knew was as much as he could endure. Yet it had to be faced. There was no alternative.

He managed to eat some supper, though calling forth an acid comment from Pete.

'I thought you said you were hungry!'

'Not very.'

'Then what were you prowling round me galley for? Making a purple nuisance of yourself before it was time? Why couldn't you stay in your bunk where you were supposed to?'

'I fed Con for you. You were supposed to do that.'

It was surprising, Laurie found, how angry he was with Pete. In spite of their exhaustion they were ready to come to blows. They were ready to tear each other's eyes out. They glared at each other.

'What's all this?' said Alan wearily. 'Shut up, both of you.'

He leaned in the doorway of the wheelhouse, rubbed his forehead.

'Have you had supper? You and Con take over, Laurie, and when we've had supper we'll try the jib and mizzen. Wait, though, perhaps we'd better come round. I'll bring her round on the other tack while you get Con in the cockpit.'

He disappeared.

This, thought Laurie, almost sobbing in despair, as he pulled and tugged at Con, is the last straw. The absolute last. For he had forgotten, or perhaps had shut his mind to the fact, that throughout the whole of his watch he would be steering in to the coast. He would be making for the cliffs and the rocks of the high coast along which they were still struggling.

Con, at any rate, was willing. He tried. Pete pushed from behind, glad to see the last of them. Con was installed in a corner of the lee bench beside the wheel. It was wet there, but he was well wedged in. At least, thought Laurie, he can stay there. He had little hope of Con being of any use.

He took the wheel from Bob and they were left alone. At first it wasn't so bad. There was only the trysail to watch. But later Alan and Bob came back and set the storm jib and the reefed mizzen. Con was able, with prodding, to tend the sheets which he could reach from where he sat, but could not tighten them firmly enough when the sails were set. Alan hauled in the sheets, then sat beside Laurie.

'Get to bed, Bob.'

Bob, after the effort of setting the sails, was on the point of collapse, but was anxiously watching the mended places in the mizzen. They seemed to be holding. Then Bob crawled below. He had not rested all day, and now that no more effort was needed, could scarcely raise his arms. He climbed into his bunk exactly as he was, oilskin and all.

Alan stayed for a while in the cockpit.

'She seems all right, Laurie. She's not too pressed. But I'll stay in the wheelhouse. I'll soon know if anything's wrong.'

Laurie nodded. Alan was bowed with exhaustion. His shoulders sagged so that he bent forward, but his eyes, now, were brighter. He could feel more power in the yacht. She was heeling further, she was ploughing through the seas, but now in the feel of her there was more purpose.

That, thought Laurie, is all right if I can hold her. And if I don't get rattled. But I don't like so much power straining under my hands. I'm not like Alan. I like something I can more easily cope with. I like to test myself, to push myself further, but in my own time. And to my own degree.

Anger boiled in him again. Anger with his whole circumstance. Anger with Alan, who pushed him too hard. Anger with himself, for what he felt was his own inadequacy. And envy, too, of Alan, who could do so much more than he could.

That, I suppose, is why I came on this blasted voyage. Because I admire him. Because I would like to be like him. Because I hate myself and all my confusion.

But most of all, just now, he hated Con, sitting below him, like an overgrown baby. Or worse still, like a lump of putty.

Laurie wiped his nose with his hand, rubbing the wet back of it along his wet, smarting, and stubbly face. Alan couldn't tell,

luckily, because they were all so wet, but Laurie was conscious, to his own shame, that he was crying.

Alan, when he was satisfied that all was well, went below. Before lying down in the wheelhouse he went to see that Bob and Pete were resting. They were not asleep.

The flare of tempers had exhausted them all. Pete, normally the most buoyant, now was feeling ashamed of himself. He raised himself in his bunk and said, 'Going all right, skipper?'

'She's going better. If everything holds. The mizzen may split, of course.'

'Say a prayer she won't. Better have a rest, skipper.'

'I'm going.'

He lay down in the wheelhouse. The preposterous positions one lived in one grew accustomed to, a little. Perhaps in time, if such a life went on, one would sleep. It seemed incredible. To sleep.

He lay with his feet braced on the locker to leeward. He was almost standing. The sea rushed in an almost solid mass along the porthole. The wheel, which they did not use much, preferring the one in the cockpit, clattered and creaked and swung a little, although it was lashed.

Alan could tell from the feel of the ship that she was riding safely. But he must remain alert. He wasn't altogether happy about Con and Laurie.

For a long time he listened. All seemed well, though the storm was as loud as ever. Alan lay a little easier. With an effort, because they were so sore, and the lids seemed immovably fixed, he closed his eyes. When closed it seemed his eyelids weighed an incredible amount, and it was just as much of an effort to lift them again. He left them shut. But he did not sleep.

Laurie, in the cockpit, had grown more used to the feel of the ship with the extra canvas. He had pulled himself together. Visibly, he felt, he had lifted his shoulders, braced himself to the storm. But to do this consciously he saw as a lack. He shouldn't need to. Alan wouldn't do it. It would never enter his head.

After a while, as the yacht staggered through the night, and the mend in the mizzen held fast, and he felt that at least they seemed to be getting somewhere, even if they weren't, his feelings towards the hulk of what was really Con became more friendly. Con just sat there. He wasn't asleep. His eyes were open. But he didn't move. As help he was non-existent, but he didn't hinder.

As long as he doesn't hinder, thought Laurie, I can manage. For the present, anyway. The thought of the coast ahead and of bringing the ship about was like a sick pin-pricking in the pit of his

stomach, but was something that could be pushed away, at least for the moment. There was an hour yet before he need watch for the coastline.

If I were to try to forget the race, forget the loss of Hongi, forget the sea altogether. I can't though. I must concentrate.

But the crashing of the yacht among the merciless welter of wind and water did, in effect, when all was going well, have its own rythmns. There was an inevitability of movement that to an exhausted mind lent in time a soothing element. Laurie found himself thinking of hills and mountains.

He had been brought up on the plains. Perhaps that was why the holidays he had spent in the hills had made such an impression. To feel cupped in green hills, to follow the paths of streams up the valleys, where water rattled over stones or flowed smoothly into the deep pools where children bathed in the summer-time, this was almost a sensual pleasure. The willow trees and poplars softened the river paddocks with a fitness that was banal, almost, the puffs and spires of green flame following the streams that in the valleys were choked with watercress, and peppered with pale boulders you could walk upon, and jump, precariously sometimes, from one to another.

And in the high valleys, clinging to the crevices, dark folds of native bush still hung, black-green, like banners of a forgotten time, here in the cultivated and conscious present.

In a sunny pool, with warm rocks to perch upon, and a few gnarled ngaio trees to offer shade, Laurie had learned to swim. His cousins jeered at his efforts at first, being themselves like eels in the water. He could still feel the glory of the moment when, standing well back from the bank, up to his chest in water, he had struck out with the determined thought, this time I will do it! And did. He sank at first, as usual, felt the water rising above his ears. A momentary panic, the bank so far away, it seemed, and then, he had not sunk, he was afloat, he was swimming!

His cousins seemed put out. There was no cause now to laugh. But in a little while they forgot, and he was one of them as never before, who could not ride a pony, or milk a cow, but could ride a bicycle, and at last could swim.

The warmth of summer days in the green valleys, a tempered heat that could be allayed by the shade of trees or the clear sound of running water, and nights in which it seemed you were in a velvet bowl, black and mysterious, under a diamond sky, stayed with him always. It was something that came back when you least expected it, and always was accompanied by sounds, the thin beat-

ing of cicadas, perhaps, and smells, the pungent smell of the stream in dark and shady places, and the acrid smell of white dust in the roadway.

Even now, each memory brought another breaking behind. White dust in the roadway, and Maori children dawdling along, dragging bare brown feet in the dust. One with a fat baby pick-a-back, in a blue cotton frock and a red hair ribbon. Dark children, with their inevitable dogs behind them.

It was too safe, thought Laurie. That was why he remembered it so well. It was something lovely, that had the innocence of childhood. Something that even then you felt was too sheltered and immature, and must, before long, be put behind. At least, he fumbled with the thought, one's own interpretation must go. The childhood dream. Which might, in effect, be far from the reality.

And so, in a natural sequence, sitting in a welter of storm and rain and painful break of surging seas, he thought of his other holidays among the foothills of the mountains. Here was where you felt intensely the real meaning of the scene, where, if life for the humans in it was hard and uncompromising, then this life was reflected in the hills, bare and screed with shingle, and in the stony wastes of the river-beds that fanned out from gorges cut in the steep flanks of the mountains.

Here, never for a moment were you free from the implications of wind and weather. Of life itself.

And so, thought Laurie, you come in the end to this. This final trial. Though perhaps it wasn't. You could never be sure of that. There was always something worse, that you hadn't reckoned on.

His mind flickered back and forth, the past and present, both urgent, shuttling within the web of his mind. It was near the mountains, he remembered, he had fallen in love for the first time. There was a dance in the district hall that lay beside the river-bed like the bleached bones of a whale. Lack of paint and the action of wind and weather had silvered the ancient weatherboards to something that shone in sunlight and glowed at night like a pale moon among the pine trees. The colours of this land were nearly always pale, drawn by the strength of the overwhelming sun in summer, the grim frosts and snows of winter. Pale gold of faded tussock, white stony wastes of shingle and rock of river-bed, remote dim blue of sky were only relieved by the brighter gold of gorse, the black green of clusters of pine trees, and the blinding white of the snow peaks behind, an unearthly backdrop.

He and his cousins had driven to the dance, piled on the ancient buggy. Even then a buggy was outmoded, the more progressive of

the farmers arriving in cars, some of the young men on motor-bicycles. Speed, though, was not yet a danger, owing to the state of the roads, and the necessity of slowing, every now and again, to ford a water-course.

There, in a room resounding to the music of piano, drums, violin and accordian, he had seen a girl in a pink silk dress, black woollen stockings and clumsy shoes. She was sitting alone on a bench, with her hands clasped nervously in her lap and her feet pushed under her as far as she was able. She had silky hair, pale as a tussock, eyes blue-grey as the snow torrents in the gorges, and looked as shy and nervous as the deer of the remote ranges.

He was sixteen, and she seemed younger. They danced together most of the evening, ate the immense supper of cream cakes provided by the country women, and said good-bye with scarcely a backward glance when her father came to collect her. They had hardly conversed all evening. She was too painfully shy, and he was not much better. But it was the first time he had felt warmth in the touch of a woman. Ridiculous to think of, but she was like the colt he held in his arms that summer, the little delicate colt with the silk ears.

He had not seen her again. His uncle had died soon afterwards, and his aunt and cousins moved to the town. He could not even remember her name. But sometimes, at long intervals, he thought of the girl in the pink silk dress. He still remembered the tunes they had danced to, and when, as infrequently happened, he heard 'Tip-toe through the Tulips', or 'Moonlight and Roses', something moved within him.

In the years between no other woman had touched him until he met Beatrice. Painfully aware that this lack of interest might lie within himself, he was now relieved that, somehow, the decision had been made. The thing to do, now, was to live up to it.

For I will, thought Laurie. I will do my part in getting this blasted yacht to port. I will manage without Con, if need be, and Alan won't think I am such a confounded fool, and when we get safely home I will marry Beatrice. As soon as we can. And hell, damn and blast all yacht races.

Laurie proceeded to swear, at length and systematically, with all the embellishments he had ever heard of. It was a good way to pass the time. Besides, it stopped him from crying.

At half-past seven he was watching anxiously for the coast. Alan had come out once, said 'I'll give you a hand in coming about,' and, after a despairing look at Con, had gone below again.

Con had not moved in his place since he'd been put there. His

eyes were open, but were dazed and quite uncomprehending. Will he come out of it? thought Laurie. What happens when we reach home?

'Con!' he shouted. 'Con, can you reach the jib sheet?'

Con gave no sign at all of having heard him. Laurie poked him, none too gently, with his foot.

'Con! I said can you reach the jib? Can you reach the jib sheet?'

Con looked at him. He smiled a little, but made no movement.

Well, that's that, thought Laurie. Now we know where we are. If I see the coast in plenty of time maybe it's all right. But will she come about? Will she do it? If Alan is here to tend the sheets she may be all right. But Alan may not hear me. Then will I have time to wear round? It might be better to wear round in the first place. Only that takes time. It loses ground. That's why Bob mended the sail. Well, partly. And even in wearing round I need someone to manage the sheets. With this amount of sail, and this wind, something will carry away unless the sheets are tended.

Oh God, what do I do? Scream for Alan as soon as I see the coast? What if he doesn't hear me?

It seemed as though all the anxiety he had ever known accumulated in the pit of his stomach. The tenseness of the last few days, the exhaustion, Con's defection, the knowledge of his dream, all built up into a monstrous minotaur of fear that centred on the sighting, and evading, of the coastline.

He was past tears. Past swearing. Yet what am I stewing about? We've done it before. A hundred times, it seems. Alan will help me. In any case I can manage myself, if I use my head. It's just the dream. I—

So soon the storm had blotted out the day. It was nearly dark. The clouds surged up from the south, avenging armies. It seemed to Laurie that they were thicker than ever. He could scarcely see ahead. But we're all right yet for a while. There's time yet.

Impossible to think that the dreaded moment arrives. The yacht surged on, it seemed would labour thus forever. The wind shrieked, and now it was wholly dark. If only the clouds would clear a little! I can't see anything. Perhaps I'd better call Alan.

Alan, as though aware of his thought, clambered through the hatchway.

'See anything yet?'

'Can't see a damned thing.'

'Should be getting close.'

He peered into the thick murk. But the black clouds rolling in did not lift, and drenched them with a stinging squall of rain, so

heavy that they were blinded. The gale behind the rain made of it something barbed and venomous, and they gasped.

'As soon as it eases off,' said Alan, 'we'll come about.'

And then they were in a roaring maelstrom of broken water.

'My God!' gasped Alan. 'Bring her up! Quick!'

He sprang to the deck to make his way forward, paused to roar 'Bob!' down the hatchway, and clawed his way to the foredeck.

Laurie, his heart in his mouth, had swung the wheel to port. Whether he did so too quickly, for Shadow with her long keel needed to be nursed round, or whether in such sea and wind she would never have done it except under full sail, it was hard to tell, but for long agonizing moments she hovered almost in the wind, with Alan backing the jib and the rest of the canvas flailing.

Then she fell back on the same tack. Alan gestured wildly to wear round.

The yacht, falling to leeward with no steerage, was caught by a gust of wind and almost submerged. She heeled so far that for agonizing moments even Alan wondered whether she would ever right herself. Laurie clung grimly to the wheel and put both feet on Con, who had water washing round his middle, to hold him there. There was a crash from below. Then slowly, so painfully slowly, the yacht righted herself.

Alan climbed back to the cockpit. He was shaking. Now they could see the rocks and the turmoil among which they were caught. And so close, so dreadfully close, the black loom of the cliffs.

'Sail her, Laurie. Don't put the wheel too fast. You must sail her round.'

Alan let out the sheets.

'Here, I'll take the wheel. And for God's sake watch those sheets. When she comes let the mizzen over gently.'

The yacht rolled and plunged among the breakers. There was no order in the sea, which washed and recoiled among rocks and rebounded from the cliffs in an inferno of sound and movement. But by some miracle they kept moving.

At least, thought Laurie, I'm not the only one who's scared. There was no comfort, though, in seeing Alan white and shaken. And how do I haul three sheets at once? Something's bound to give way. Where's Bob, in the name of Christ?

Then Pete was beside him.

'Haul in the mainsheet, Pete, as she comes! Where's Bob?'

'Bob's out cold! Shall I start the engine?'

'She's coming!' said Alan. 'Watch your sheets!'

For now they were sailing, and had some control of the yacht.

But the dreadful rolling and plunging, so close to rocks which they seemed to miss by a miracle, was unnerving. Shadow swung in a circle, and as the booms came over Pete and Laurie hauled at the sheets as though possessed, as though their lives depended on it, which indeed they did.

The jib could wait. But the mizzen was dangerous. Once out of hand the sheet might carry away, the sail flog to pieces again on the shrouds and spreaders. And they needed all the power they could get, at the moment.

Pete stumbled over the binnacle and fell against Laurie. Laurie fell against Con, across whom he was leaning. The rope pulled out in his hands, scorching the skin off, and the boom came home with such a crash that the yacht swung wildly to leeward. Again she was half submerged. Alan with one hand grabbed the sheet above his head and hauled with Laurie, who managed to make fast to the anchor just as Con, who all this time had remained immovable but was now perched impossibly high to windward, toppled slowly forward, pitching to such an extent that he went clean overboard.

To Alan and Pete, petrified in this last and utter calamity, it seemed that Laurie went straight in after him. Before they had time to think there were two black sodden lumps of clothing washing rapidly to the stern. In the froth of broken water they showed distinctly, more clear than weed or porpoises.

Alan heaved over the free end of the mizzen sheet. Pete had started towards the lifebuoy. But just as he went past the stern, still low in the water, Laurie's hand came up and he grasped the coaming.

Then they saw that with his other hand he was grasping Con. By the scruff of his neck. And managed to push him alongside so that Alan and Pete could haul him, with help behind from Laurie, into the cockpit.

This task fell mainly on Pete. Alan was still almost fully occupied with the ship, and with saving them all. And Con was a heavy man. The only thing that made it possible to save him was that every now and again the sea washed up, and floated them both a little further towards safety.

Pete at last was able to roll Con into the cockpit, where he fell with a thud among the mess of ropes and odds and ends and washing water, and stayed there. Laurie was hanging on grimly, with both hands now, but when the yacht rolled to windward was lifted high, and wrenched along the topsides, so that his task of hanging on was a superhuman one, and could not have endured much longer.

But when the stern fell down again, and the water washed in,

Pete was able to help him to the deck, where he lay for a while, grasping the coaming of the cockpit. Every time the yacht fell to leeward he was almost submerged, but at length he managed to pull himself to safety.

For a long time he sat with his head in his hands.

'Pete,' said Alan, 'haul in the jib sheet, will you?'

'My God!' said Pete. 'By all that's bloody well miraculous!'

'We're safe, I think,' said Alan. His teeth were chattering. He could hardly speak. 'I think we're out of it.'

Indeed they were out of the worst of the chaos. No more rocks reared up in an inferno of white water, no longer did the cliffs loom overhead, in awful blackness, and Shadow had ceased the worst of her dreadful rolling. Pete trimmed the sheets, slowly. He was exhausted.

'The ruddy jib was flapping all the time. Might have been torn to ribbons.'

'We were lucky, that time.'

'Lucky, by God! We haven't used the engine, either.'

'Didn't have time to.'

Slowly, painfully, now it was over, Alan vomited.

Laurie raised his face from his hands.

'Are we all right? Is the ship all right?'

'She's still afloat.'

'I don't think she hit anything,' said Pete. 'We'll find out, sooner or later.'

He peered at Laurie.

'You've got blood all over you.'

'Have I? It's my hands, I think.'

The palms of his hands were raw.

'Do they hurt?'

'No. Not yet, anyway'

'They will later.'

'Is Con all right?'

'He's still breathing. Luckily.'

Pete bent over him. He tried to haul him up, but Con was too heavy.

'Leave him there,' said Alan. 'See that his face is out of the water.'

Pete propped Con's head on some rope. Then suddenly sat beside Laurie.

'You know what?' he said after a moment. 'I thought I was going to faint. Me. Fainting.'

Then he began to giggle.

'It's quite the wrong time to laugh, but you know what? It's a good thing I was too tired tonight. I didn't undress.'

'Lucky,' said Laurie. And leaned his bloody head again in his bloody hands.

'Would have looked nice in my purple striped pyjamas. Eh?'

Pete laughed, but not with his usual bellow. It was a weak laugh, and it quavered.

'Well, boys, the cook will now retire to his usual quarters.'

'Pete,' said Alan, who seemed to be glued to the wheel.

He felt as though he could not have walked. His legs were jelly. 'Pete, what's happened below? What's happened to Bob?'

'Things below,' said Pete, 'are not too good. A bit of a shambles. Bob was getting out of his bunk when she went on her beam ends. It threw him on his smacker right in his ruddy radio. I'd better see he hasn't drowned in the meantime.'

'Is she making water?'

'Somewhat. Things are rather wet and untidy.'

'Look,' said Alan. 'I'll take the wheel for a while. I couldn't pump her out. Not just yet. When Laurie's feeling better he can take the wheel and I'll help you down below. I want to look, in any case. I don't think she hit, but we can't be certain.'

'I'll soon let you know, if she's making too fast.'

In a little while Alan forced himself to his feet. He must see what had happened below. He found a pair of woollen gloves in his pocket, and Laurie pulled them over his torn hands, and slid himself along the bench, hauled himself, with the help of the wheel, to the windward seat, where he liked to be when steering, and assured Alan that he could manage perfectly.

He himself wasn't so sure. He felt completely exhausted. Those awful minutes when he felt he could never climb aboard again would never be forgotten. He could scarcely lift his arms. Yet he would steer the ship. There was nobody else to do it.

Alan went below, into a shambles that an exhausted Pete was doing his best to cope with. Water, books, odds and ends of clothes, apples and onions washed about with every movement of the ship. There was enough water for uneasiness. Bob was still unconscious, propped in a corner with two soaked pillows behind him.

How do I know, thought Alan in despair, if she's leaking badly? How can I tell? And if she is, Bob is unconscious, the direction finder is torn from its mooring, and the face of the radio is smashed. We have no outside contact.

With a sick feeling in the pit of his stomach he realized, we are in a mess, perhaps a bad mess, and we are quite alone.

PAT WILSON

The Waimapu River

THERE is a still country
Not far from me.
Images from it stand
Like statuary
Against the shifting flux,
Reality.
They are the constant points
Round which I go.
They stand dislodged, apart:
When I stream through
Their gates, their outer guards
I pass into

A changeless country, still,
Perpetual.
All that could happen there
Long ago fell
Into its final form
With all that will.
Into the hills there winds
A corridor,
A gently moving stream:
By that calm shore
Image on image rises
And stands there.

There floats the great white launch
None ever use.
Motionless in the sun,
All bright things fuse
Into one brilliant core
That never stirs.
Bulrushes hem the banks,
Olive and brown.
Their dip and sway in the wash
By now has grown

Into an everlasting
Curving line.

Harshly a pukeko
Sounds on and on.
A jetty, damp and old,
Juts from among
The trees' perpetual shade
Towards the sun.
Dimly at the dark base
A pathway shows.
Forever dwindling off
Into the trees
By the black pool and up
The hill it goes.

And weeping willows cloud
The waterway.
Great magnolias tower
And hang on high,
Their creamy flowers glowing
Night and day.
There stands the wild orchard
Of bitter fruit,
The empty barn, the bridge
Arching apart
To the forgotten quarry
Of the heart.

THOMAS CRAWFORD

Robert Burns: Three Longer Poems

I

IT IS appropriate that Burns should be studied in New Zealand, if only because of the shadows cast in Dunedin and elsewhere by the statues of the Bard. These are monuments which today excite admiration only among small boys—memorials less to the real poet who loved and suffered and sang than to the great Burns Myth that prevented a just appreciation of his work for nearly a hundred years. However neglected his poems may be today, the very existence of the statues has something of an ironical significance in view of what this country has since become; for the Burns of legend (or of one legend) is no less than the Philistine's Poet. According to this still popular conception, Burns never offends or disturbs, and there is nothing difficult or *morbid* about him. He purified Scottish song of its grossness and obscenity and he was capable of a grand and spiritual passion (I refer, of course, to his famous devotion to Highland Mary, now, alas, sadly deflated by the researches of modern biographers). His very weaknesses were precisely the frailties of the business man, the racing-reporter, or the senior N.C.O.; and it is to his eternal credit that he did the Decent Thing and married his Jean in the finish, after she had borne him two sets of illegitimate twins. There are two traditional interpretations of his end. One has it that, corrupted by town life and the adulation of the upper classes during his Border and Highland tours, he drank his way to the tomb as his work declined progressively in quality; the other holds that after he married Jean Armour he was in fact (apart from some minor lapses) a sober, decent husband, whose early death was due not to debauchery but to the combined effects of rheumatic endocarditis and the sea-bathing prescribed by his medical advisers. Either way, he remains the Philistine's Poet—his best work staled by custom, distorted, or ignored; his worst things praised to the skies. Either way, he is a man to shed a maudlin tear over: poor, graceless, senseless, soulful, rhyming Rabbie.

Now there is a sense in which the legends are true. The bad

passages in his poems exist, and they cannot be wished away. In one of his many facets he was the Polonius of the parish:

> The sacred lowe o' weel-plac'd love, *flame*
> Luxuriantly indulge it;
> But never tempt th'illicit rove,
> Tho' naething should divulge it. ('Epistle to a Young Friend')

He hit off the outlook of the small shopkeeper or farmer to a T, in the days before cheap money and the State Advances:

> I hae a penny to spend,
> There—thanks to naebody!
> I hae naething to lend,
> I'll borrow frae naebody. ('I hae a Wife o' my Ain')

His praise of bonnie lasses could sound as nauseatingly sentimental as that of any of his nineteenth-century New Zealand imitators:

> Ye're wae men, ye're nae men *sad*
> That slight the lovely dears;
> To shame ye, disclaim ye,
> Ilk honest birkie swears. *each; fellow*
> ('Epistle to Mrs Scott, the Guid Wife of Wauchope House')

and if it is not to Burns that we owe 'Breathes there a man with soul so dead', yet there are signs that he too was capable of orthodox patriotism—with one significant and redeeming qualification:

> Who will not sing *God save the King*
> Shall hang as high's the steeple;
> But while we sing *God save the King,*
> We'll ne'er forget THE PEOPLE!
> ('Does Haughty Gaul Invasion Threat?')

Against such sentiments as these it is possible to put at least an equal number of entirely opposite ones: the Dionysiac abandon of the ribald verses contributed to his own collection, *The Merry Muses of Caledonia*, the paean of sheer anarchy that ends 'The Jolly Beggars', the expression of essentially working-class attitudes to life in 'Man was Made to Mourn' and the 'Epistle to Davie, a Brother Poet', the polemical abandon of the anti-Calvinist satires, and—most sinister of all—his savage delight in the prospect of a Peasant War in Britain:

> But mark the Rustic, haggis-fed,
> The trembling earth resounds his tread,

Clap in his walie nieve a blade, *large fist*
He'll make it whissle;
An' legs an' arms, an' heads will sned *lop off*
Like taps o' thrissle. *tops; thistle*
('Address to a Haggis')

In the course of his recent work of general criticism, *The Fire and the Anvil*, Mr James K. Baxter has tried to explain the contradictoriness of Burns in terms of the fashionable idea that the poet in his writings expresses not so much himself as a *persona* or creative mask, a personality more or less deliberately assumed for the occasion:

> In attempting to assess the significance of a poem, one must realize that nearly all poetry is dramatic in character. The catharsis which a reader experiences could not occur if he felt the self that the poem expresses to be entirely actual; rather, the self is a projection of complex associations in the poet's mind, and the poem enables the reader to make the same projection. The *I* of a poem may not exist. Thus, if one regarded the work of Burns as a poetic *credo*, one would have to conclude that he was either insincere or schizophrenic . . . . But the problem arises from a false conception of the poet's role. If Burns had been permanently committed to any one attitude, he could not have attained the objectivity necessary to write at all.

I am not concerned with the general validity of the theory to which Mr Baxter appeals, but simply with his statement as it applies to Burns. Now no one would deny the dramatic element in Burns, although his most recent critic, Miss Christina Keith, does her best to minimize it. I would claim, however, that at times, both as a man and a poet, he exhibits precisely that insincerity and schizophrenia whose existence Mr Baxter denies. Indeed, one might even go so far as to say that the dramatic lyrics are possible only because of a certain relative schizophrenia. The dramatizations of Burns express a reality that is in motion, that develops, that is contradictory; and to be able to body forth such a world Burns had to be in himself (and not simply in play) both Calvinist and anti-Calvinist, both fornicator and married man, both Jacobite and Jacobin, both drunk and sober, both local and national, both Scots and English, both British and European, both Philistine and anti-Philistine.

David Sillar, the recipient of his 'Epistle to Davie, a Brother Poet',

informs us that even during his most parochial period Burns liked to dress differently from others (a peculiarity which he shares with later poets), and that his rustic friends were afraid of him and distrusted his opinions. 'I recollect hearing his neighbours observe, he had a great deal to say for himself, but that they suspected his principles', he wrote. There was a strain of exhibitionism in Burns which led him to assume with evident delight the pose of an unspoilt child of nature, although there were also shrewd practical reasons for such a disguise. For one thing, it was the best possible way of securing attention in the century of Rousseau and Stephen Duck, and very much more sensible than poor Chatterton's expedient of dressing up his own creations as newly discovered medieval manuscripts.

Alexander Smellie, the son of the printer of the second (Edinburgh) edition of the poems, has set on record 'the curious way in which Burns deported himself while in the composing room: he would walk up and down the room several times, making a long whip that he carried in his hand whistle through the air, but he did not seem to take the slightest interest in the work of the compositors, who were busy with his own manuscripts'. The pose is exactly that of the Dedication to the Edinburgh Edition: 'The Poetic Genius of my country found me, as the prophetic bard Elijah did Elisha—at the PLOUGH; and threw her inspiring mantle over me . . . I tuned my wild, artless notes as she inspired.' Burns's negative capability is rather different from Keats's; it consisted in being all things to all men, in suiting his letters and his conversation and above all his poetry to his audience—in actually *becoming*, for the moment, what he imagined his correspondent or his interlocutor or his ideal reader wished him to be. He had a dozen *personae* in his poetry, and a dozen personalities in real life. He loved Jean Armour with his strong and domineering body, but 'worshipped' Mrs Maclehose according to the ritual of the eighteenth-century version of courtly Love. He was a sober and religious-minded companion when with Dugald Stewart the philosopher or the rhetorician Hugh Blair, but a bacchanalian reveller when in the company of William Nicol and Robert Ainslie. It is the complexity of his character and the almost bewildering contradictoriness of his moods which have made possible both the legends about his life and the conflicting judgments which have been passed on his poetry.

The more extreme among the post-Romantics would categorically refuse to him the title of Poet. His poems are 'rhymed eloquence, rhymed pathos, rhymed sense; yet seldom essentially

melodious, aërial, poetical', according to Carlyle; while Gerard Manley Hopkins shares the same view. To him Burns's utterance 'is never really beautiful, he has no eye for beauty, he gets no nearer than the fresh picturesque expressed in fervent and flowing language', while in another place he asserts that there is more true poetry in the works of the Dorsetshire parson, the Rev. William Barnes, than there is in Burns. Matthew Arnold's judgment was more truly catholic than Hopkins's. Although he disliked what he called Burns's world simply because it was a Scottish one, he was nevertheless able to see things in Burns which the Jesuit missed. To Arnold, Burns was 'not a classic . . . but a poet with thorough truth of substance and an answering truth of style, giving us a poetry sound to the core'. Taking issue with Arnold, Auguste Angellier, the most brilliant French critic of Burns, placed Burns securely in his European setting. 'His form is admirable,' he wrote; 'it is perfect. He is perhaps the most classic writer in English literature. I mean in the fashion of the Greeks and not of the Latins, who lacked spontaneity and movement.' It used to be traditional to regard Burns as a harbinger of romanticism and a precursor of the nineteenth century: but for many—for W. E. Henley and John Speirs, for example, each in his own way—Burns is the reverse of new; he is the last and finest flower of an old vernacular tradition before it withered into inevitable decay. The majority of critics from Francis Jeffrey to Christina Keith have stressed that his best work is in the dialect; and many of these have suggested, usually by implication rather than direct statement, that his English poetry is invariably poor. But a substantial minority—among them men of undoubted taste and judgment, like Sir Walter Scott, or Sir William Craigie, or that great medievalist W. P. Ker—have not been afraid to praise some of his English poems. To some, he is supreme as a satirist; to others, as a song-writer; to others, as the heroic painter of domestic piety; to others still, as a master of the comic. The very multiplicity of judgments suggests that the conventional disclaimer ('It would seem difficult to justify yet another book, or essay, or article, on Burns') is unnecessary, and that the last word has not yet been said. Although there may be room for disagreement on details, current taste is agreed upon the merits of the songs, the satires, the 'Jolly Beggars' cantata and 'Tam o' Shanter'. I shall therefore say nothing about these for the present, but devote this article to an attempted revaluation of three of his non-satiric longer poems.

II

If one ignores its superb technical mastery, there is little discordance between 'Hallowe'en' and the idealized image which Burns imposed upon his countrymen: 'Unacquainted with the necessary requisites for commencing Poet by rule, he sings the sentiments and manners he felt and saw in himself and his rustic compeers around him, in his and their native language' (Preface to Kilmarnock Edition, 1786). These sentiments and manners were so unfamiliar to the majority of his more sophisticated fellow countrymen that he had himself to append a series of explanatory notes — an itemized stanza-by-stanza account of the superstitions of the natives—in order that the poem should be understood by contemporary readers. If the current prejudices of the critics are sound, 'Hallowe'en' should be among the very best of Burns's productions. Its language is the Doric pure and undefiled, and its subject is a series of rustic genre-pictures: homely, vigorous and concrete, full of a pulsating, joyous movement and free from any taint of the abstract or the rhetorical. And yet the poem, considered as a whole, fails to please. Burns is always at his best when he connects local themes and personalities with the abiding interests of the nation and the universal preoccupations of mankind. Here, for once, he fails: and he fails because, for all its movement and activity, the poem does not develop. Its motion is entirely circular, and furthermore it seems to narrow in smaller and smaller gyrations. It is true that in the second stanza there is an attempt to unite a local scene with the heroes and symbols of nationhood:

> Amang the bonie winding banks,
> Where Doon rins, wimplin, clear; *runs, meandering*
> Where Bruce ance ruled the martial ranks,
> An' shook his Carrick spear.

Bruce was at one and the same time an Ayrshire man and a leader of national resistance, and the mention of his name is surely intended to remind us that the 'merry, friendly country-folks' of the poem belong to a nation as well as to a parish. But the placing of the stanza is unfortunate; it comes so early that we soon forget it in our contemplation of the rustic high-jinks that follow. The comedy of 'Hallowe'en' is Jonsonian rather than Shakespearian, although there is present none of Jonson's intellectual wit. The characters are both objectified and framed, and their frantic animal gaiety seems to explode in miniature, as if seen through the wrong end of a telescope. Take the young girl who puts two nuts in the

fire to foretell the outcome of her courtship; if they burn quietly together, the course of love will run smoothly and placidly, but if they spatter away from each other the affair will come to nothing but lovers' quarrels:

Jean slips in twa, wi' tentie e'e; *heedful eye*
Wha 'twas, she wadna tell;
But this is *Jock*, and this is *me*,
She says in to hersel:
He bleez'd owre her, an' she owre him, *blazed over*
As they wad never mair part;
Till fuff! he started up the lum, *chimney*
And Jean had e'en a sair heart *sore*
To see't that night.

This is one of the finest and most vivid stanzas in the poem: but the deliberately distorted accentuation of 'mair part' and 'sair heart' serves to dehumanize the emotions and subordinate them to the rhythm of an unending Bacchanalian dance. It is instructive to compare Burns's treatment of Jean in this stanza with his attitude in the later dramatic lyric 'Tam Glen':

The last Halloween I was waukin *waking and gazing at*
My droukit sark-sleeve, as ye ken— *drenched singlet-sleeve*
His likeness came up the house staukin,
And the very grey breeks o' Tam Glen! *breeches*

Come, counsel, dear tittie, don't tarry!
I'll gie ye my bonie black hen, *give*
Gif ye will advise me to marry *if*
The lad I lo'e dearly, Tam Glen.

In 'Tam Glen', Burns is concerned solely to transmute into poetry the loving and delighted recognition of character; in 'Hallowe'en', there are elements of superciliousness, of conscious superiority, and even of thinly disguised cruelty. That peasant and small-town humour is often of the sort which rejoices in the misfortunes and discomfiture of others may be granted; but the admission does not thereby turn 'Hallowe'en' into a great comic poem. In 'Hallowe'en' there is altogether too much dialect, too much whimsical rusticity disporting itself for the amusement of such educated readers as have the patience to look up the glossary. Here, for example, is fighting Jamie Fleck, who sows hemp-seed, drags a dung-fork behind him as a harrow, and calls out the traditional charm:

Hemp-seed I saw thee, *sow*
An' her that is to be my lass
Come after me, an' draw thee
As fast this night.'

In spite of his boast that he does not believe in such old wives' tales:

He whistl'd up *Lord Lennox' March*,
To keep his courage cheery;
Altho' his hair began to arch,
He was sae fley'd an' eerie; *frightened*
Till presently he hears a squeak,
An' then a grane an' gruntle: *groan; grunt*
He by his shouther gae a keek, *shoulder; looked*
An' tumbled wi' a wintle *somersault*
Out-owre that night. *head over heels*

He roar'd a horrid murder-shout,
In dreadfu' desperation!
An' young an' auld come rinnin out,
An' hear the sad narration:
He swoor 'twas hilchin Jean M'Craw, *hobbling*
Or crouchie Merran Humphie— *Hunchback*
Till stop! she trotted thro' them a';
And wha was it but grumphie *the sow*
Asteer that night? *astir*

The commotion of all this is superb, and the passage reads like a rehearsal for some well-known stanzas in the 'Address to the Deil'; but in spite of these undoubted merits it is marred by its tone. However much he may try, the modern reader cannot altogether share in parochial guffaws at the physical defects of the helpless and the deformed; he is unable to appreciate these stanzas to the full, just as he feels considerable embarrassment when reading another exercise in the comedy of self-gratulation, the lyric 'Sic a Wife as Willie Had':

She's bow-hough'd, she's hen-shin'd, *bandy-legged*
As limpin leg a hand-breed shorter; *hand's breadth*
She's twisted right, she's twisted left,
To balance fair in ilka quarter: *every*
She has a hump upon her breast,
The twin o' that upon her shouther; *shoulder*
Sic a wife as Willie had, *such*
I wad na gie a button for her.

The worst stanzas of 'Hallowe'en' are those that contain the grandmother's reminiscences, where it almost seems as if we are expected to laugh at senility, and the best are those which describe the amorous and sensual widow. Taken in isolation, they are as good as anything in Burns:

A wanton widow Leezie was,
As cantie as a kittlen; *lively; kitten*
But och! that night, amang the shaws, *wooded dells*
She gat a feafu' settlin!
She thro' the whins, an' by the cairn, *gorse*
An' owre the hill gaed scrievin; *careering*
Whare three lairds' lan's met at a burn,
To dip her left sark-sleeve in, *singlet*
Was bent that night.

Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays, *sometimes; waterfall*
As thro' the glen it wimpl't; *meandered*
Whyles round a rocky scaur it strays, *jutting cliff*
Whyles in a wiel it dimpl't; *small whirlpool*
Whyles glitter'd to the nightly rays,
Wi' bickerin, dancin dazzle; *hurrying*
Whyles cookit underneath the braes, *appeared and disappeared*
Below the spreading hazel
Unseen that night.

Amang the branchens, on the brae, *slope*
Between her an' the moon,
The deil, or else an outler quey, *devil; unhoused young cow*
Gat up an' ga'e a croon:
Poor Leezie's heart maist lap the hool;
almost jumped through her skin
Near lav'rock-height she jumpit, *lark-*
But mist a fit, an' in the pool *foot*
Out-owre the lugs she plumpit, *ears*
Wi' a plunge that night.

The reader, if he has been responding actively to the poem, creates for himself a picture of the widow's whole personality and appearance: small, dark, vicacious, playful and exquisitely silly. His heart jumps with hers, and he can almost feel the bitter chill of the water as it fills her ears. He laughs; but there is no malice or cruelty in his reaction, because the ducking does not endanger life

or limb or beauty. It is the middle stanza of the three just quoted that lifts the whole incident to the level of poetry, gaining an extra dimension from the reader's recollection of the opening verse of the whole poem:

> Upon that night, when fairies light
> On Cassilis Downans dance,
> Or owre the lays, in splendid blaze, *grass lands*
> On sprightly coursers prance;
> Or for Colean the rout is ta'en,
> Beneath the moon's pale beams;
> There, up the Cove, to stray an' rove.
> Amang the rocks and streams
> To sport that night.

The stream which the widow seeks is white, cool and dazzling like the fairies, and dances as lightly as they; it is as 'cantie'—and even as treacherous, despite its apparent placidity, as Leezie herself. Then, as so often with Burns, the poem is allowed to end suddenly and abruptly, like some country dances, in a rather perfunctory description of 'social glee'. It is all over, Burns's longest flight in the pure dialect; and it is almost as unsatisfactory as his purely English poems such as the 'Second Epistle to Robert Graham of Fintry'. True, Burns here secures effects that are more impressive than anything in the 'Epistle to Graham': a breathless, never-ending motion reminiscent of 'Christ's Kirk on the Green', Dunbar's 'Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins', or that anonymous folk-ballad which is known to all Scotsmen and many New Zealanders—'The Ball of Kirriemuir'. But the very merits of 'Hallowe'en' are also its defects. It is all particulars, and lacks that saving infusion of the general, uniting and giving significance to details and minutiae, which is essential if a poem, or a scholarly treatise, or a scientific dissertation is to achieve the highest excellence. 'Hallow'en', it is true, is not entirely without a tincture of philosophy. In its Rousseauistic preference for the natural and its criticism of 'art' (i.e., civilization) the poem is similar to 'The Cottar's Saturday Night', but the reader would never guess this for himself if it were not for the epigraph:

> Yes! let the rich deride, the proud disdain,
> The simple pleasures of the lowly train:
> To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
> One native charm, than all the gloss of art. Goldsmith.

If it was part of Burns's intention to illustrate this sentiment, his actual achievement was quite different. There is a detachment, a

withdrawnness about the humour which would seem to make 'Hallowe'en' the perfect exemplum of W. P. Ker's judgment on the poet:

> But one must note that he does not 'render' or 'interpret' the life of rural Scotland simply as one of the people. He stands apart. He is not the voice of the people, but the voice of a judge to whom the people are more or less indifferent, who is far above them, and who sees them as small creatures moved by slight and trivial motives. *(Essays on Modern Literature)*

Precisely because in 'Hallowe'en' Burns has applied the tones and attitudes of a certain type of satire to ordinary everyday life, he is less universal, more embarrassingly parochial and less truly national than in any other of his longer poems. The consequence is that 'Hallowe'en' is today read almost exclusively by Burns scholars, while 'The Cottar's Saturday Night', despite the sneers of professional critics, is known and loved, if not by millons, then at least by thousands of quite ordinary people throughout the world.

III

It has long been fashionable to despise 'The Cottar's Saturday Night' because of its sentimental rhetoric and predominantly English diction, although there are signs—notably in the recent critical studies by David Daiches and Christina Keith—that the poem is once more coming into favour. 'The Cottar' arises out of attitudes and experiences similar to those which underlie the deservedly popular verse epistles. There is the same patriotism, the same depiction of wintry landscape, the same love of the poor and hatred of the 'paughty feudal thane', the same assertion that money-grubbing is evil while love and frendship are the finest things in life. In the epistles, these attitudes are poured out in an apparently spontaneous and decidedly humorous helter-skelter, like the patter of a rustic Figaro—and we are all enchanted. But in 'The Cottar', Burns's favourite measure ('Standard Habbie', he called it) is exchanged for a variant of the complicated Spenserian stanza which he cannot handle really well even in the best sections, while the content is expressed in the contemporary English manner—a style that has never been exactly popular with poetry readers since the canonization of Wordsworth and Keats in the nineteenth century. Scholars and critics of our own time have made the 'common reader' aware of metaphysical poetry and even of Dryden and

Pope, but the poetry of the later eighteenth century still seems repulsive to most of us. It takes an effort of the imagination to think in terms which the late eighteenth century understood, just as it takes an effort of the imagination to enter into the spirit of medieval Byzantium or the mental state of the Trobriand Islanders. Nevertheless, the attempt has to be made if we are to appreciate 'The Cottar's Saturday Night'.

The opening stanza addressing Robert Aiken, to whom the poem is dedicated, may be an afterthought, as some have suggested; but it is not out of place, and it asserts the overwhelming value of friendship in a world of artificialities and corruption. The second line, 'No mercenary bard his homage pays', allows the opposition between friendship and money, never far from Burns's thoughts, to appear in faint outline, but only as subdued by friendship. The direct worth of Honesty is stated, together with a scorn of selfish ends—a euphemism, I think, for what Burns elsewhere termed 'catch-the-plack'. In ll. 4-5, Friendship is associated with the singing of 'simple Scottish lays'—not altogether an accurate description of what follows, for the poem itself mixes simple Scots with the occasionally rather abstract poetic diction of eighteenth-century England.

The second stanza has been condemned because it is full of echoes from Gray's 'Elegy'. These, however, are not evidence of either simple plagiarism or servile imitation, but rather of the deliberate use of familiar associations in order to enrich the reader's perception by referring him to poems he already knows. As James Sutherland has pointed out in *A Preface to Eighteenth Century Poetry*, the method was standard throughout the eighteenth century and it had been used by Milton himself in the seventeenth century. We do not condemn it when it is employed by T. S. Eliot, perhaps because his references are to poets like Dante and Webster, who possessed a certain snob-appeal in the 1920's. It is therefore difficult to see why we should turn up our noses at Burns when he does the same sort of thing with Gray, Goldsmith, Shenstone, Beattie, Fergusson, Pope, Gay, Milton, Thomas Warton, Cowper, Collins, and Shakespeare (there are echoes of all of these in 'The Cottar's Saturday Night'). The only difference is that since these writers wrote in English and were popular in the eighteenth century the results of the method were probably accessible to a large number of Burns's contemporary readers, whereas there are few today who can appreciate Eliot without a tutor. This stanza (thanks in part to these reminiscences of earlier works) presents a very

attractive genre-picture and conveys a distinctively Scottish impression in the very minimum of dialect.

In the third stanza, the echoes are from Milton rather than from Gray. The 'Camera Eye' shifts from the cottage to the family inside it, almost as in a documentary film, and the language attains a particularly satisfactory unity of English and Scots; thus l. 25, 'The lisping infant, prattling on his knee', though pure English, does not in the least conflict with the surrounding lines, in which a faint tincture of dialect is present. In the fourth stanza, the Cottar and his family are no longer mere silhouettes, but seen in depth, in their economic and social setting. The elder children are wage labourers to neighbouring tenant-farmers, and even 'their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman-grown' is herself in service and may have to eke out the housekeeping with her 'sair-worn penny fee'. From the beginning of the sixth stanza the synthesis of Scots and English tends to be expressed as an almost regular and line-by-line alternation between them. Lines 41-5 may be taken as typical of this process:

> The parents, partial, eye their hopeful years;
> Anticipation forward points the view;
> The mother, wi' her needle and her sheers,
> Gars auld claes look amaist as weel's the new; *compels*
> The father mixes a' wi' admonition due.

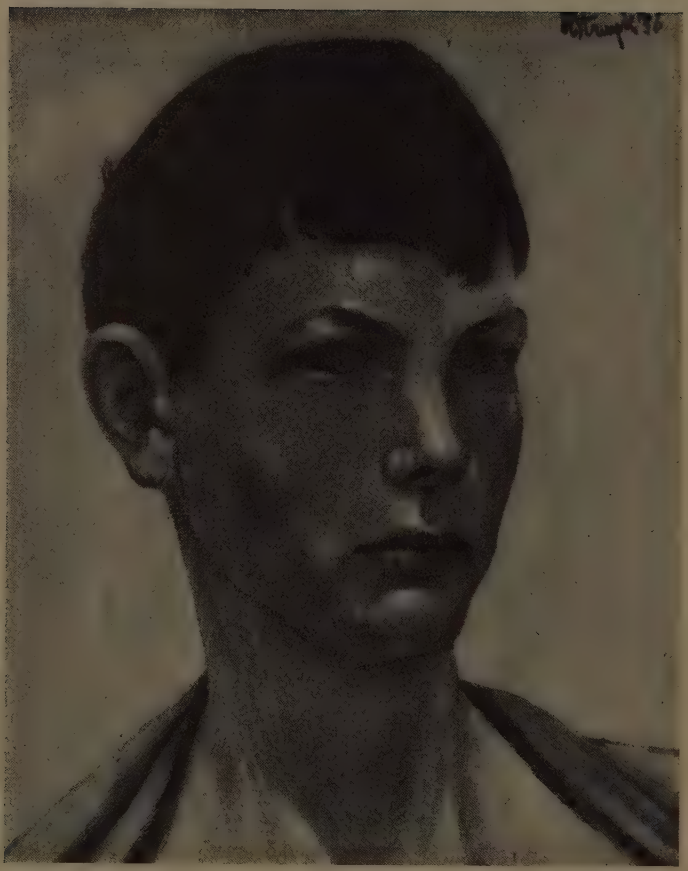
It is important to realize that the first two lines of this passage (ll. 41-2), as well as the last (l. 45), have an intentionally humorous undertone: Burns eyes the couple quizzically but not unkindly and he chooses the artificial expressions quite deliberately, so that there can be no doubt as to his attitude. The sudden transition to a solid and straightforward presentation of the mother is also, I think, intentional. Burns puts before us not simply a woman sewing, but a woman forced to sew by economic necessity, who yet loves to do so, in order that her husband and children should appear 'decent' in the eyes of others. A whole life of quiet heroism and the values and the struggles of an entire class are crystallized in these two lines, 43-4. Their vocabulary may not seem radically un-English; the Scotticisms may appear a matter of orthography merely; but there is present nevertheless a specific northernness of idiom and phrase which is just sufficient to convey the intended impression.

Oscillation between Scots and English continues in the more detailed account of the father's admonitions that follows, in Stanza VI; but even when he is at his most English, the father remains

12 in. x 16 in.

LEO BENSEMANN. Caroline
Pencil 1956

FOUR PORTRAITS



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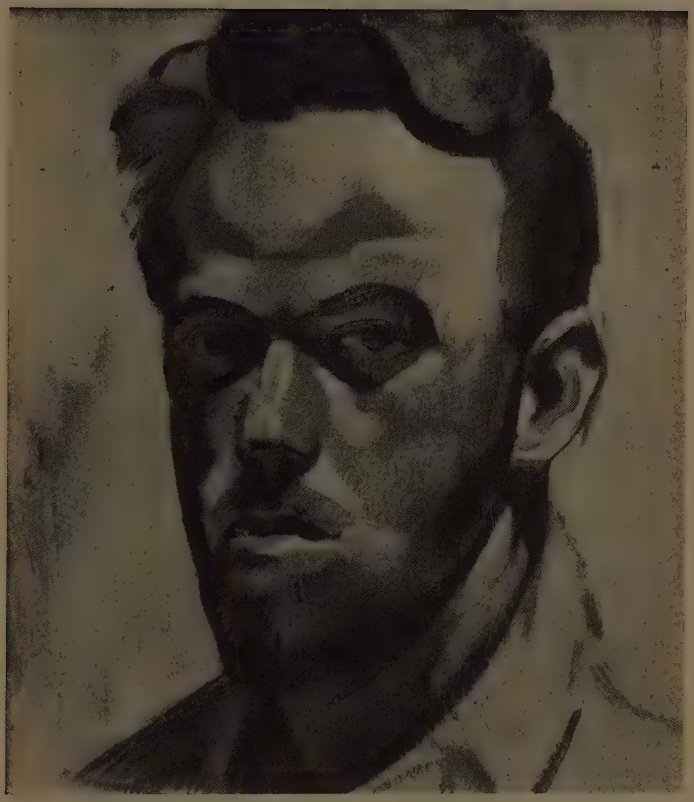
HUBERT STRUYK. Lewis
Oil 1956



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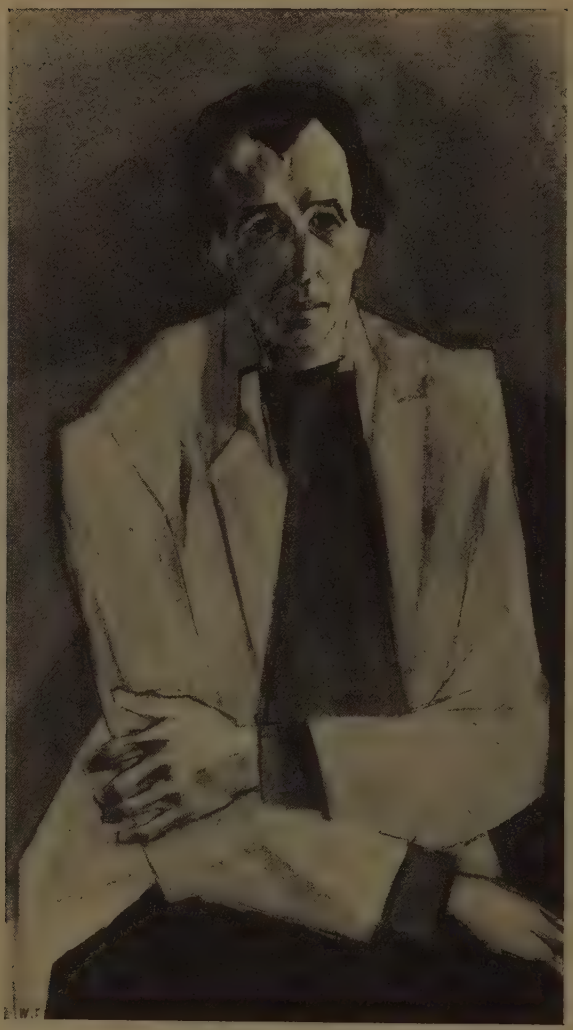
W. A. SUTTON. Self-portrait
Oil 1956



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WILLIAM CULBERT. Barry Miller
Oil 1956

Scottish in phrase and choice of idiom, as does his daughter Jenny when she explains that her sweetheart is waiting outside the door. The time has now come for another excursion into English: 'The wily mother sees the conscious flame' (l. 59). This pleasantly artificial antithesis is an example of a kind of humour in which Burns delighted. Here is the same device in 'The Jolly Beggars':

> The caird prevail'd: th' unblushing fair *tinker*
> In his embraces sunk,
> Partly wi' love o'ercome sae sair, *sorely*
> An' partly she was drunk.

We can all recognise that the 'Jolly Beggars' passage is funny because the contrast between the poetic diction and the action described is so grotesque, and also because we know that the whole poem is comic; and yet when we come upon the same thing in 'The Cottar,' we speak of 'artificiality' and 'Burns's inability to write in English'. Yet the line (l. 59), to those with ears to hear, conveys a delighted smile at the scene, enjoyment of the contrast implied between love in a cottage and love in sentimental novels, together with humane and compassionate understanding of both mother and daughter. This is humour of quite a subtle and civilized sort, utterly different from the self-regarding cruelty of 'Hallowe'en'. Almost immediately, and in keeping with the poem's logic, the Scottish end of the see-saw begins to rise:

> With heart-struck anxious care, enquires his name,
> While Jenny hafflins is afraid to speak; *half*
> Weel-pleased the mother hears, it's nae wild, worthless rake.

'Hafflins' is the only unfamiliar word in the passage; but by its position in the line and by the phrasing of 'it's nae, wild, worthless rake', an unmistakeably Scottish tone is given to the scene. Any reader who calls these three lines sentimental has failed to appreciate all their nuances—the mother's fussy anxiety, the convulsive catch of the girl's breath (conveyed by the placing of 'hafflins' and the very sound of the word), the mother's relief, and the poet's slightly ironical but still sympathetic observation of her complacency. W. E. Henley complains that the poem lacks 'realism'. One may well doubt whether it is possible to convey a more accurate representation of the exteriors of social life than Burns gives us in this stanza and in the following one (stanza VIII). In the ninth stanza, however, the poem begins to sink. We are presented with general reflections of an abstract nature suggested by the scene, exactly as in the second stanza of 'To a Mouse':

I'm truly sorry Man's dominion
Has broken Nature's social union,
An' justifies that ill-opinion
Which makes thee startle
At me, thy poor earth-born companion
An' fellow mortal.

In 'To a Mouse' the device is successful; in 'The Cottar', it is a miserable failure. It is as if Burns were aware of what had been lacking in "Hallowe'en', and had determined to repair the deficiency, only to err in the other direction altogether by producing nine lines of entirely unnecessary comment. Here, at least, it would have been far better to have left the picture to make its own impression on the reader.

But if the ninth stanza, with its 'heart-felt raptures! bliss beyond compare—', comes perilously near to bathos, there can be no doubt about the tenth. It is one of the most nauseating verses ever penned by a reputable poet. The mask of the conventional moralist has been altogether too deliberately assumed; whatever sort of mask it is, it is not a creative one; and we are all the time aware, behind the disguise, of a face that could only too easily lend itself to the 'rakish arts of Rab Mossgiel'. It is not our knowledge of the poet's life history which makes us distrust his pose here, so much as the hysterical rhodomontade which runs through the stanza:

A wretch! a villain! lost to love and truth! . . .
Curse on his perjur'd arts! dissembling, smooth! . . .
Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,
Points to the parents fondling o'er their child?
Then paints the ruin'd maid, and their distraction wild?

Mercifully, the poem rallies in the eleventh stanza to a finely-etched picture of the evening meal. The whole of this stanza is shot through with dialect, except for the first line; taken together with the twelfth stanza, in which Scottish intonations are present, it affords a marked and intentional contrast to all the subsequent verses, which are in English. Stanzas XIII-XVI contain the real centre of the poem: the description of family worship from which everything else radiates. All that has gone before—the realism, the humour, the dialect—exist only for this scene; English or not English, it is worthy to be the kernel of a great poem. Just as in previous sections Burns has relied heavily on the reader's reminiscences of Milton, Goldsmith, Gray and others, so now he relies on the association of well-known scriptual names—Abraham, Moses,

Job, Isaiah, Christ and his Apostles. I cannot agree with Sir William Craigie that the slighting references to Italian music in Stanza XII are a blemish any more than 'blind mouths' and 'the two-handed engine at the door' are faults in 'Lycidas'; nor do I feel that the poem is materially weakened by the seventeenth stanza, with its explicit statement that institutional religion is inferior to 'the language of the soul', although as poetry it is of lesser quality than the description of the Bible-reading itself.

The real conclusion is Stanza XVIII, in which 'the parent pair' pay their 'secret homage', praying that God will not only provide for the material needs of the family 'But chiefly, in their hearts, with grace divine preside.' The last three stanzas form a rather pedestrian coda which affects us like the more ludicrous recitatives of certain early operas. One wishes these verses were less clumsy but it is important to realise that they—or something like them—are essential to the work as Burns planned it. They are meant to achieve what the second stanza of 'Hallowe'en' fails to do because it occurs too early in the poem, namely to raise the local to the level of the national; therefore, they are an integral part of the poet's intention. But if that were all that is in the poem, if 'The Cottar's Saturday Night' were a national poem and nothing more, it would not be as good as—with all its faults—it is. Its most abiding qualities reside in the universality of the central episode, which irradiates even the rhetorical conclusion. The evolution of the poem is from a sombre beginning, with its portrayal of the weariness that is the aftermath of physical labour, to a concretely presented interior that merges imperceptibly into a transfiguration and sublimation of the worshipping father and his family. The alternation between dialect and English is essential to the inner movement of the work: the English lines and diction of the earlier sections look forward to the later heightening and ennobling of reality, while the complete change-over to English in Stanza XIV is the outward and visible sign of a leap from the lowly to the 'human sublime'. If one is willing to close one's ears to the central statement of 'The Cottar', it is all too easy to magnify its faults and say with W. E. Henley that it is 'of its essence sentimental and therefore pleasingly untrue'. But perhaps a juster verdict is that of the French critic Angellier:

> Never has so much dignity been spread on the existence of the poor . . . . (It is) a solemn homage to humble virtues . . . . It attains the summits of human dignity, where all social distinctions have fallen, where the soul alone appears, where what

there is of the absolute in virtue bursts forth and shines and causes to melt around it, like vain things of wax, riches and noble birth. (Robert Burns, *Les Oeuvres.*)

It is fashionable to sneer at such conceptions today, just as it was after the Restoration of Charles II. But the ethic of 'The Cottar's Saturday Night' is not easily overthrown, nor can it be put down by the jibes of modern aestheticians. It is a morality with a long and honourable history behind it. King Lear on the heath was aware of its force, and it is present in the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus. Indeed, perhaps its noblest expression is a chorus in the *Agamemnon*:

> And Righteousness is a shining in
> The smoke of mean houses.
> Her blessing is on the just man.
> From high halls starred with gold by reeking hands
> She turns back
> With eyes that glance away to the simple in heart,
> Spurning the strength of gold
> Stamped false with flattery. (Trans. Lattimore)

It is true that 'The Cottar's Saturday Night' lacks both the perfection and the strength of *King Lear* and the *Agamemnon;* nevertheless, in spite of all its crudities, its clumsiness, its deplorable and sometimes unpardonable lapses, it gropes towards a sublimity of the same kind as theirs, and succeeds in conveying similar ethical insights in a non-tragic form.

IV

It is almost as difficult for the modern reader of poetry, brought up on Eliot and Hopkins and Donne, to appreciate 'The Vision' at a first reading as it is for him to apprehend without special effort the full achievement of 'The Cottar's Saturday Night.' And yet the attempt is well worth while, for the work is evidence of Burns's ability to think poetically—not, it is true, in the actively reverberating symbols of the metaphysical school, but in images of a more passive and allegorical sort. W. P. Ker, one of the few critics to give 'The Vision' its due, has pointed out that the sensibility exhibited in the poem has medieval affinities, and qualities that go back as far as Boethius. This traditionalism does not prevent the content of Burns's thinking from being surprisingly modern; the

poem reveals an awareness of the causes of social change which many a historian might envy. Behind 'The Vision' is a rather special kind of self-knowledge, the exploration of the relationship between the poet and the nation to which he belongs. Like 'The Cottar's Saturday Night', it moves from the particular to the general, from the local to the national, from dialect to eighteenth-century rhetoric; but Burns's handling of English is more successful than in 'The Cottar', and there are few of those defects which make 'The Cottar', for all its undoubted merits, a deeply flawed poem.

'The Vision' is organized in two main sections or Duans, the first of which sets the scene and describes the apparition of Coila, a rustic Muse, while the second part reports her words and final disappearance. Since the centre of the poem purports to be a dream, Burns is compelled to depict his material surroundings as concretely as possible in order to render credible the ensuing supernatural event. The peculiarly vivid impressions of the first stanza are therefore necessary for what is to come. The winter sunset, the curlers stopping their noisy jollity on the ice, the starved hare loping towards the kitchen garden and leaving her prints on the snow—all are essential for Burns's purpose. The next four stanzas depict the personal situation of the poet, which is one of the determinants of the vision; they convey an overwhelming impression of melancholy and physical weariness. Twilight is described in a personification more direct than is usual for Burns:

> And when the day had clos'd his e'e,
> Far i' the west . . . .

That, of course, is exactly what Burns himself should be doing, after long hours of wielding the flail. But, as often happens when the body is exhausted by physical labour, the poet's senses are acutely and nervously alive. At first it is the sense of sight which predominates. He *eyes* the volleying smoke until, immediately afterwards, smell takes over ('reek', 'hoast-provoking smeek')—only to yield in its turn to hearing as he suddenly becomes aware of the 'restless rattons' above his head. Everything that he can see or hear or sense fits into the pattern of his brooding. He reflects that if he had not wasted his time 'stringing blethers up in rhyme/ For fools to sing', he too might have been a commercial success; he is torn between poetry and the world, in a struggle which is the common experience of most of the artists of our present cilivilization. Thus, even at his most personal, when he seems occupied solely with his own private and bardic concerns, Burns expresses the general and the typical, giving voice to a conflict not unknown

even in New Zealand. He is just about to make up his mind to give up poetry altogether:

When click! the string the snick did draw;
An' jee! the door gaed to the wa';
An' by my ingle-lowe I saw,
Now bleezin bright,
A tight, outlandish hizzie, braw, *well-knit; hussy; handsome*
Come full in sight.

Ye need na doubt, I held my whisht; *silence*
The infant aith, half-form'd, was crusht; *oath*
I glowr'd, as eerie's I'd been dusht,
In some wild glen;
When sweet, like modest Worth, she blusht,
An' stepped ben. *in*

As usual, Burns is working in a tradition; as usual, he is following literary sources—in particular, a work by Woolaston, dating from 1681, in which the Muse appears when the poet, in a mood of utter depression, is about to forswear the writing of poetry for ever:

What indigested thought, or rash advice
Has caused thee to apostatize?
Not my ill-usage, surely, made thee fly
From thy apprenticeship in poetry.

It was always Burns's method to 'string his rustic lyre with emulating vigour': and here, as was normal with him, he surpassed his models.

Burns treats his holly-decked Muse with a mixture of humour and courtesy that disarms us in advance. Just before his account of the Muse's features and symbolic accoutrements, he permits himself an introductory smile at his own expense:

I took her for some Scottish Muse,
By that same token;
And come to stop those reckless vows,
Would soon been broken.

His Coila is a thoroughly Petrarchan lady whose flashing eyes 'beam keen' with the courtly quality of 'honor'. She is dressed in bright tartan, and her bare legs are so perfectly moulded that only those of the poet's own mistress could possibly equal them: another flash of humour that serves to increase our belief in this creature of dream.

From the twelfth stanza onwards, dialect gives way to English poetic diction, but the poem does not deteriorate in quality. The stanzas describing the Muse are pervaded by a loveliness that is both natural and formal, and filled with a beauty utterly different from that of Romantic poetry. Coila's mantle has on it the physical features not of Ayrshire in isolation, but of Ayrshire seen in the larger context of the entire nation; the Highlands and 'the lordly Dome' of art are mentioned too, although local features are the most prominent. The rivers and towns of Burns's native county are set in a landscape alive with the figures of the local gentry—heroes who fought the English in the Scottish War of Independence (1285-1371) and in later wars, together with Ayrshire notables of Burns's own century who had carried on this tradition of patriotism, or who, like Professor Dugald Stewart and his father, had served Scotland in the arts of peace. To regard these Stanzas (XVIII-XXII) as flattery of the local nobility and nothing more would be to misunderstand Burns's intention completely. 'The Vision' is the work above all others in which Burns shows himself most aware of the contemporary national renaissance: a movement which, in many spheres of life, from agricultural improvement to moral philosophy, was led by the most energetic and forward-looking of the landed gentry.

It might be argued that the outlook implied by these stanzas is in violent and absolute contradiction to the condemnation of aristocracy which informs 'The Twa Dogs' and is implied in 'The Cottar's Saturday Night'; Mr Baxter would no doubt explain the change by saying that Burns has simply adopted a different *persona* from his store of 'creative masks'. It seems to me, however, that the real explanation lies elsewhere. The position of the landed proprietors in late eighteenth century Scotland was itself a confusing and contradictory one. The gentry who were compelled by economic difficulties to rack-rent their tenants and expose them to the brutal insults of stewards and 'factors' were often the same men who in other branches of life were among the leaders of national revival. There were two sides to the landlords, and two sorts of men among them. In 'The Twa Dogs', Burns's subjects are the sufferings of the disappearing class of cottars and the political and social corruption of those lairds who betray the nation by aping foreign ways. In 'The Vision' Burns selects as being especially significant either those local worthies who are continuing in their own lives the military traditions of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, or those who are in fact among the intellectual

leaders of the Scottish people: unjust lairds and parasites are not mentioned at all.

There is a sense in which the landlords and the common people are opposed to one another, and a sense in which they are connected like root and flower. In the second part of this poem, Burns explores this other and more organic relationship between the gentry and the mass of the people by means of a thoroughly English type of machinery, an 'aerial band' of guardian spirits reminiscent of the sylphs in Pope's 'Rape of the Lock'. When W. E. Henley dismissed all this as intolerably sentimental and artificial, he allowed his lack of sympathy with the eighteenth century to blind him to the significance of what Burns is really doing. In this Duan Burns asserts his right to be considered as part of a great and many-sided national movement. The leaders of this resurgence are the soldier (Stanza IV, l. 2), the liberal politician advocating parliamentary reform (Ibid., ll. 3-4), the poet (Ibid., l. 5-6), and the hoary sage (Stanza VI). Burns is well aware that Scottish poets and savants writing in English, men like Thomson and Beattie and Robertson and Smith, are all offshoots of the one renaissance; indeed, so convinced is he of their importance that he holds the 'rustic bard' employing the dialect to be inferior to the Scottish poet writing in English (Stanza VIII).

Further down the social scale is another instrument of national life, the class of artisans and agricultural labourers producing the material means of subsistence; and closely associated with these are the sylphs who teach the new methods of production:

> Some teach to meliorate the plain,
> With tillage-skill. (Stanza IX)

Moreover (though this is implied by the arrangement of the stanzas and the succession of images, rather than stated directly), the continuity of life is essential for the existence of a nation. The idea of Scotland would be meaningless without people, and there would be no people unless men and women fell in love:

> Some hint the lover's harmless wile;
> Some grace the maiden's artless smile;
> Some soothe the laborer's weary toil
> For humble gains,
> And make his cottage-scenes beguile
> His cares and pains. (Stanza X)

The order in which these various ranks and concepts is mentioned cannot, in my opinion, be fortuitous; to suppose otherwise

is to degrade Burns to a mere mechanical rhymester or 'crambo-jingler'. Those men who are traditionally and most obviously the leaders of a nation are mentioned first—the landowners, the legislators, the thinkers and the writers; all those whose task it is to lead the nation, or to adorn and interpret its thoughts and moods. Next come those who are to be described perhaps as its foundation, the men and women without whose labour there could be neither spiritual nor material values; and they are mentioned in the same breath as the improvers of crops and the devisers of new machines. It is surely no accident that the lover and the maiden, so essential for the continuance of the race, appear in close juxtaposition to the agricultural worker, whose labour (as Burns's contemporary fellow-countryman, the economist Adam Smith, so clearly recognized) is in the last resort the source of the wealth of nations. It is the rustic lovers and the toil-worn Cottar of the 'Saturday Night' all over again, with the difference that in 'The Vision' they take their places in a poetic analysis and synthesis of a whole society and its inter-relations which for its boldness and comprehensiveness is unique in this century outside of certain works by Fielding and Swift. As in 'The Cottar's Saturday Night' and 'The Twa Dogs', the labourer and cottar toil for 'humble gains' and endure 'cares and pains'. Now, however, they are seen as being not simply exploited and oppressed, but rather as part of an altogether more complex set of relationships—as being, in the words of the nineteenth-century poet James Thomson, 'the dung that makes the roses sweet'.

The fact that the poem returns to the figure of the Bard, outlining his life-history in a miniature Poet's Progress *after* the mention of the lovers and the labourer, serves to connect Burns with everything that is most creative in the ordinary activities of men. The mere ordering of the stanzas links him with the essence and informing principle of all Scotland rather than with anything superfluous or merely ornamental. As the poem develops, the Bard is put into the context of something even more fundamental than human labour; he is seen as indissolubly connected with Nature (Stanzas XIV-XVI). The next topic mentioned is that of the poet's instincts, which, because of their proximity to a description of the natural scene, are made to seem like Nature taken into himself. Our feeling that they are the same instincts as those of the Lover and the Maiden of Stanza X strengthens the association between the poet and the foundations of social life; and it is noteworthy that the instincts, like Fancy, are divine:

I saw thy pulse's maddening play,
Wild-send thee Pleasure's devious way,
Misled by Fancy's meteor-ray,
By passion driven;
But yet the light that led astray
Was light from Heaven.

The total effect of this group of stanzas (XIV-XVIII) is to achieve a unity of the Personal and the Elemental of the sort which we associate with poets like Shakespeare and Yeats rather than with those who confine themselves to literal statements and obvious meanings. That Burns, employing non-symbolic conventions and a diction that is sometimes hackneyed, can in this poem penetrate so deeply beneath the surface of social life, is at once a tribute to his genius and a reminder that good poetry can be written without reverberating imagery. It is surely significant that even Burns found it necessary to abandon his accustomed naturalism in order to reveal the inner workings of his society. To write 'The Vision', he had to desert the everyday for the world of fantasy and dream. In spite of his conviction that a poet who writes in dialect must inevitably be inferior to a Thomson, a Shenstone or a Gray, he knows that the lot of even a rustic bard is better than the courtier's or the millionaire's (Stanza XXII). The aim of a national poet, indeed of any poet, is to:

Preserve the dignity of Man,
With soul erect;
And trust the Universal Plan
Will all protect. (Stanza XXIII)

There is therefore not the slightest conflict between Burns's nationalism and the interests of the broadest humanism. His is a patriotism compatible with internationalism, for it merges with 'the dignity of Man'. The poem ends in a fine image of sight, sound and motion:

'And wear thou *this*'—she solemn said,
And bound the holly round my head:
The polish'd leaves and berries red
Did rustling play;
And, like a passing thought, she fled
In light away. (Stanza XXIV)

'The Vision' is one of the highest achievements of Burns. Its movement from a vernacular prelude to a rhetorical centre and

conclusion is highly successful, and in its use of English it is superior to both 'The Cottar's Saturday Night' and 'Man Was Made to Mourn'. It is fashioned out of the same preoccupations and conflicts that underlie Burns's early lyrics and epistles—the war of poetry and prudence, the scorn of money-chasing, the challenge of ungovernable instincts, the riddle of riches and poverty; but these topics are illuminated by an understanding of politics and history and of their relation to the revival of the Scottish nation which Burns never surpasses elsewhere. It is the very summit of Burns's work as a national poet, displaying an emotional and intellectual awareness of historical processes that can be paralleled among his contemporaries only in the work of William Blake. I should say that Blake is the greater poet: but in this one magnificent and little-read poem, Burns attains something of Blake's insight, though by very different methods.

V

A re-examination of these three works suggests conclusions which are difficult to frame in terms of Mr Baxter's theory of creative masks. In order to interpret the poems satisfactorily, the reader has to respond not primarily to *personae* but to actual things and people: a locality, a resurgent nation, a society in which some men are wealthy and others are oppressed. If he wishes to come to grips with these objects and characters and institutions, the reader must share in the perceptions of a real and very contradictory person, who was sometimes ironically detached and consciously superior, sometimes sympathetic and gently humorous, sometimes highly personal and subjective. These different attitudes are not so much masks as moods; and they are expressions of Burns's continuing struggle to master himself, his culture and his nation. Everything, including the poet himself, is fluid and in motion; everything, including language, appears to go in two directions at once. Since the Scottish consciousness was profoundly influenced by England throughout the eighteenth century, it could be revealed only with difficulty in Lallans, and Burns's attempts to do this are almost invariably failures. A divided mind may need a divided language: in Burns's case, a modified dialect (as in some of the songs), or a skilful and unobtrusive alternation between Scots and English (as in 'The Cottar's Saturday Night' and 'The Vision'). The mind may also seek a goal and the ultimate healing of its division, as Burns's undoubtedly did: his linguistic experiments were essentially part

of his search for an End. (I am referring not to an abstract ideal but to the synthesis attained or desired in each poem, which by its very nature is different from that aimed at in any other work, even by the same author.) Although the unity of 'The Cottar's Saturday Night' is incomplete, that of 'The Vision' is by no means so blemished; and in two later poems, 'The Twa Dogs' and 'Tam o' Shanter', Burns was to attain perfection in the combination of Scottish and English words and idiom, although he was never again to think so profoundly as in 'The Vision'.

JANET FRAME

The Dead

THEY die and are buried, travelling
the proud polished way to the clay castle.
They return omnipotent in dream, beating
the rebellious time till it bleeds and is defeated:
roaring the lesson of their death
till the waking mind creates repeats
learns the shocking subtraction, and graduate in sorrow
is set free.

Years later the frail senile dead return. They plead
to cross the border into sleep.
Down at heel, out of work, they beg in vain
for bed and food at the old lodging-house of dream—forage
perhaps a small crust of memory
a nightmare breathing of their name,
then go back to their castle's furnished magnificence
of weed, worm and illegible stone.

ALAN RODDICK

Letter from another World

Slowly, the watching constellations wheel.
Slowly, alone in her last and lonely room,
She writes these winter words to her son's children,
Seasons distant, and almost five years foreign:

'. . . so very tired . . . I have no news to send you . . .
'Today was bright and clear, though bitter cold . . .
'I have no news.'

From all the chill and darkness
Of her winter years, these weak, thin words
Whisper across the world: but, tossed and swung
In chiming tides of summer, in the clamouring sun,

We cannot read their meaning, cannot know
The silence of those empty nights, drawn down
Against the empty and unwanted dawn; while still,
Slowly, the waiting constellations wheel.

MARGARET WALKER

Translating Chekhov

The production of a play is like a treasure hunt; digging deeper and deeper and discovering with excitement fresh meanings, fresh motivations and fresh relationships. In the production of a translated play, particularly when the translation is stilted and literary, this process becomes infinitely more difficult. Subtle relationships and meanings become obscured by words and thoughts which are unclear to actors and producer. There is a feeling of battling

against the script and study of it becomes frustrating rather than rewarding.

During the last few years I have produced plays by Anouilh and Garcia-Lorca. Anouilh's plays seemed reasonably well translated and adapted, but Garcia-Lorca's magnificent play, *The House of Bernarda Alba*, was tantalizing and frustrating. Although every effort was made to obtain one, a copy of the play in Spanish could not be found, so that even by the time of performance there were still phrases from which we felt we had not extracted the full or the correct shade of meaning.

When recently I began work on a production for the Victoria University College Drama Club of Chekhov's play *The Cherry Orchard*, my first problem was to find a translation which was colloquial, actable, and retained what I felt to be the spirit of the original. Although there are excellent translations of some plays, most seem to fall into two classes. The first is the literal one where every word is meticulously translated with no attempt at the substitution of an equivalent English expression. The second is that of the translator who feels he must rewrite the play in what seems to him a better phrased and more accurate form of speech.

After reading several translations, I selected that of Elisaveta Fen, published by Penguin Books, as being the best from a production point of view. I would like to emphasize that in the following discussion of Miss Fen's translation of *The Cherry Orchard*, it should not be forgotten that in most respects her translation is better than any of the others available. However, as some expressions and sentences seemed stilted, I asked Natasha Tver, whose first language is Russian, to check them with me in the original script. The differences we found were so disturbing that we went back to the beginning of Act I and translated the whole play. This article is an attempt to summarize some of the more significant differences which occur between Miss Fen's translation and the script as Chekhov wrote it. In all cases where comparative passages of dialogue are shown, Miss Fen's translation is on the left and our translation on the right. It should be emphasized that in most cases the version on the right is a simple, straightforward translation of of the Russian, whereas Miss Fen has attempted to 'improve' on the original.

Chekhov intended *The Cherry Orchard* as a comedy—'in places,' he says in his letters, 'even a farce'. For years many unnecessary tears have been shed on both sides of the footlights over this play, and I believe that at least some of the blame is due to inadequate translation. In Miss Fen's version there is almost no differentiation

in the strength of speech of the various characters, whereas this is strongly emphasized by Chekhov. Although the 'straight' characters come through reasonably well, characters with very strong personal characteristics are levelled and a great deal of the comedy is thereby lost. The absurd airs which the two servants, Yasha and Dooniasha, give themselves, disappear to some extent as in Yasha's words to Liubov Andryeevna in Act III—

I want to ask you for something, please! If you go to Paris again, do me a favour and take me with you . . . Take me with you, please do.	Allow me to make a request of you. If you go to Paris again, grant me a favour and take me with you . . . Take me with you, please be so kind.

In fact where stilted language is essential to the characterization and is so written in the original, the translation tends to be colloquial. But where a colloquial expression is necessary, the language used by Miss Fen is often stilted and clumsy. For instance—

Talks in a bantering sort of way	Jokes
I've finished my coffee; now I can go and rest.	Coffee's finished. Off to bed.
Extenuating circumstances	Excuses

Once a play loses its hold on the audience, the play is a failure and the playwright has failed in his intention. When this happens because a translation gives only the literal meaning and not the conception of the words, the translator has done the playwright a grave disservice. The translation of a Russian play does, of course, raise many difficulties. Russian is a language capable of conveying great subtlety and deep affection and for many expressions there is no English equivalent. A literal translation of these expressions not only loses their significance but tends to impose a barrier between audience and actors. When, for example, at the end of Act I Trofimov, much moved, speaks of Ania, the literal translation of the word he uses is 'my little sun'. The word itself is a deeply tender one used only between mother and child or between lovers. Its literal translation can only be laughable for an audience and it is, in any case, a most difficult expression for an actor to use with sincerity and feeling. Miss Fen misses the point by translating the word as 'my one bright star', giving it a meaning which it does not possess. I feel that a simple endearment such as 'my sweet Ania' conveys more clearly the sentiment which Chekhov wished to express.

Not only are actual words difficult in some cases to translate, but various forms of speech have no English equivalent and the script thus loses in subtlety. At the end of Act III, Pishchik suddenly leaves off his vulgarity and says in a form of speech quite different from that previously used by him, 'She's crying. Come into the ballroom, leave her alone . . . .' Charlotta addresses Yepihodov in the form of speech used only to servants. Lopahin, caught off balance by Varia's sudden attack in Act III, addresses her in a servile form of speech. None of these points are indicated by the actual words which the characters use, and I feel it would be of help in such cases if a translator gave not only the words but also, in a note or stage direction, the manner of speech in which the words are used.

There will still remain some phrases, expressions, jokes, which are untranslatable. Where this occurs I think it is better to delete the words in question rather than risk the imposition of a barrier between actor and audience. One particular point of interest in this respect is the use by Lopahin of the name 'Ohmelia' for 'Ophelia' when quoting from *Hamlet* in Act II. For us the substitution of 'Ohmelia' has no significance. In fact the pronunciation betrays him at once as a peasant because of his inability to pronounce the 'ph' sound. (It is probable that Lopahin makes deliberate use of the pronunciation in the same way that he belligerently asserts, 'I'm a peasant'.) However, the use of 'Ohmelia' can only be confusing for an uninitiated audience and is surely better replaced by the correct name.

Points such as that mentioned above may be a matter of preference, but there can be no argument about the use of tense. All translations which I have read have in places substituted the past tense for the present. Where Chekhov uses the present tense it is for a definite purpose. Frequently it gives the narration of events the effect of an interior monologue. Always the effect is more dramatic. From the viewpoint of theatrical language alone, compare these two translations of Ania's speech from Act I—

When we arrived in Paris it was cold and snowing. My French was awful. Mamma was living on the fifth floor, and when I got there she had visitors. There were some French ladies and an old priest with a little book, and the room was

We get to Paris . . . cold and snowing. My French is awful. And Mamma living on the fifth floor. When I got there, there were some French people — ladies and an old priest with a book—a smoky, untidy room —so uncomfortable. Suddenly

full of cigarette smoke, so untidy and uncomfortable. Suddenly I felt sorry for Mamma, so sorry, that I took her head between my hands, and just couldn't let it go . . . Afterwards Mamma cried and was very sweet to me.

I felt so sorry for Mamma, so sorry. I took her head in my hands and just couldn't let go . . . Then Mamma cried and hugged me.

She had already sold her villa near Mentone, and she had nothing left, positively nothing. And I hadn't any money left either, not a penny: I had hardly enough to get to Paris. And Mamma couldn't grasp that! In station restaurants she would order the most expensive dishes and tip the waiters a rouble each. Charlotta was just the same. And Yasha expected a full-course dinner for himself . . .

She's already sold her villa near Mentone, and she's nothing left, nothing. I didn't have a penny either—hardly enough to get to Paris — *and Mamma* doesn't understand! We sit down to dinner at a station and she orders the most expensive food and tips the waiters a rouble each. Charlotta is just the same. Even Yasha demands a full-course dinner.

I want to emphasize that the version on the right is almost a word-for-word translation and that the punctuation and mixing of present and past tenses are Chekhov's. It can be seen how in Miss Fen's translation the addition of conjunctions and 'padding' to extend Chekhov's half-statements and tentative thoughts into fully completed sentences, results in a loss of effectiveness and build. It becomes very difficult for the actor to isolate and emphasize the key word or phrase in the speech. In the character of Lopahin this 'literary' form of speech results in a loss of excitement and force. His essential power and confidence is muffled by a translation which adds irrelevant small words and phrases. For instance, the speech in which he describes the buying of the cherry orchard—

Yes, I bought it. Wait a moment, ladies and gentlemen, do, please. I don't feel quite clear in my head, I hardly know how to talk . . . When we got to the auction, Deriganov was there already.

I bought it. Wait, ladies and gentlemen, do, please. I feel dazed. I can't speak . . . We get to the auction. Deriganov's there already.
. . . . He bid forty-five, I bid fifty-five; he keeps adding five

. . . . He bid forty-five, I bid fifty-five; he kept on adding five thousand each time and I added ten thousand each time. Well, it finished at last—I bid ninety thousand over and above the mortgage, and I got the property. Yes, the cherry orchard's mine now! Mine!	thousand each time, I add ten. Well, it finished. I bid ninety thousand above the mortgage. I won. The cherry orchard's mine now! Mine!

Lopahin is, in fact, one of the chief sufferers in Miss Fen's translation. The form of speech Chekhov gives him is a blunt one. But from the opening of the first act we are given by Miss Fen a comparatively polite man who talks in well-phrased, completed sentences. For example—

Oh, leave me alone. You make me tired.	Shut up. You bore me.

Chekhov also helps to establish Lopahin's character from the outset by the omission of the personal pronoun before a verb—

I've been reading this book and I haven't understood a word of it. I fell asleep reading it.	Here I was—reading this book —couldn't understand a word of it. Fell asleep reading it.

A frequent error which occurs in translations from the Russian is in the use of the diminutive. This diminutive form of the noun is known as 'laskatelnoje', derived from 'laskatj' ('to be tender towards'). The construction does not necessarily have any reference to physical size. 'Mamochka' is 'dear mother', not 'little mother'. 'Muzhichok' the affectionate use of the word for peasant, implies not 'little peasant' in the sense of size, but simply an attitude of mind of the speaker towards the peasant. To mean physically little, the word 'malenkij' would be inserted before 'muzhichok'. When Liubov Andryeevna says, 'My Varia is a little peasant', it is a very warm, affectionate statement. In contrast the inadequacy of Miss Fen's translation can be seen—'(Varia) comes from the common folk and she's a hard-working girl'.

This diminutive is simply an affectionate form of the word, the use of which springs from a certain mood in the speaker and stimulates in the hearer a similar mood or response. The construction is, of course, frequently used in talking to children. In Act I the relationship of Feers (the old family servant) to Gayev is clearly shown by his use of the diminutive (or affectionate form) in the

line translated by Miss Fen as 'You've put on the wrong pair of trousers again.' The word used is not 'brjuki' (trousers) but 'brjuchki' which might best be translated as 'panties'. Feers speaks to Gayev as he would to a small child.

This attitude of Feers to Gayev is justified. In many ways Gayev is a child. But his childlike quality of outspokenness to the point of rudeness does not come through in Miss Fen's translation and results in a loss of the comedy in some of Gayev's lines. In Act I when Pishchik requests a loan, Liubov Andreyeevna, after protesting that she has no money, finally says—

Very well, then. Leonid will give you the money. You give him the money, Leonid.	Very well, then. Leonid will give it to you. Give it to him, Leonid.

to which Gayev replies—

I'll be delighted; anything he wants, of course.	I'll give it to him. Hold out your pocket!

Gayev's bluntness is also watered down when in his speech about Liubov Andryeenva at the end of Act I he refers to her as 'immoral' and Miss Fen translates this as 'a bit easy-going morally'.

It is extraordinary how small changes in translation can alter not only the conception of characters but the delicate balance of relationships. When Liubov calls Ania and Varia to her she says *not* 'Come here, my dears. My dear children . . . .' but 'Come here, come here darling. My dear ones . . . .' The first part of her statement is obviously to her real daughter, Ania, with a quick change to include her adopted daughter, Varia, in the family circle.

The following speech of Liubov Andryeevna's to Trofimov in Act III also provides examples of the way in which meanings can be subtly distorted—

What truth? *You* can see where the truth is and where it isn't, but I seem to have lost my power of vision, I don't see anything. You're able to solve all your problems in a resolute way—but tell me, my dear boy, isn't that because you're young, because you're not old enough yet to have suffered on account of your problems. You	What truth? You can see where the truth is and where it isn't, but I seem to have lost my sight, I don't see anything. You solve all your problems boldly—but tell me, my dear boy, isn't that because you're young, because the knowledge you've gained hasn't yet been won through suffering. You look ahead boldly—but isn't it

look ahead so boldly—but isn't that because life is still hidden from your young eyes, so that you're not able to foresee anything dreadful, or expect it? You've a more courageous and honest and serious nature than we have, but do consider our position carefully, do be generous—even if only a little bit—and spare me. I was born here, you know, my father and mother lived here, and my grandfather, too, and I love this house — I can't conceive life without the cherry orchard, and if it really has to be sold, then sell me with it . . . You know, my son was drowned here . . .

because you don't see or expect anything dreadful, because life is still hidden from your young eyes? You're bolder, more honest than we are, you have more depth, but do think, do be generous—even if only a little bit—spare me. Here I was born, here my father and mother lived, my grandfather too. I love this house. Without the cherry orchard my life has no meaning and if it really has to be sold, then with the orchard, sell *me* . . . Here my son was drowned . . .

It is interesting to note Miss Fen's interpolations of 'you know' towards the end of the above speech. This error occurs through Chekhov's use of the word 'vedj'. Originally from an old Slavonic word meaning 'to know', this word is now used simply for additional emphasis. A literal translation of 'you know' in front of the sentence, however, tends to weaken the statement rather than make it more forceful. A more emphatic form of the line is, 'Here I was born'.

In our translation it is also interesting to note the repetition of the word 'bold'. Frequently where Chekhov intends repetition, Miss Fen goes to some lengths to give a different synonym each time. This can be seen again in the following speech of Ania's at the end of Act III where the motif is 'come away'. The theatrical excitement and build gained by the repetition of this phrase is almost lost in Miss Fen's version.

Mamma! . . . Mamma, you're crying? Dear, kind, sweet Mamma, my darling precious, how I love you! God bless you, Mamma! The cherry orchard's sold, it's quite true, there isn't any cherry orchard any more,

Mamma! . . . Mamma, you're crying? Dear, kind, sweet Mamma, my wonderful Mamma, I love you, I bless you! The cherry orchard is sold, it's gone, that's true . . . true . . . but don't cry, Mamma, you

it's true . . . but don't cry, Mamma, you still have your life ahead of you, you still have your dear, innocent heart. You must come away with me, darling, we must get away from here! We'll plant a new orchard, even more splendid than this one—and when you see it, you'll understand everything, your heart will be filled with happiness, like the sun in the evening; and then you'll smile again, Mamma! Come with me, darling, do come! . . .

still have your life ahead of you, you still have your kind, pure heart. Come away with me, come away, darling, come away. We'll plant a new orchard, even more splendid than this one—you'll see it and you'll understand, and happiness, quiet, deep happiness will fill your heart, like the sun in the evening; and you'll smile, Mamma! Come, darling, come!

It has not been possible in these notes to do more than indicate the difficulties confronting translator and producer. The unfortunate thing seems to be that so rarely is the translator a person intimately connected with the theatre who ensures that the lines can not only be read, but spoken.

NOTE: I would like to acknowledge the invaluable help of Miss Natasha Tver in providing a literal translation from the Russian and in working on the English version with me. The spelling of the Russian names used in this article may be unfamiliar to those acquainted with other translations but as Miss Fen's text is being used for comparative purposes, I have retained the spellings used by her in the Penguin edition.

R. S. MILNE

The Referendum Revived

LATE this year there is to be a referendum on the abolition of capital punishment for murder. The regular three-yearly rhythm of referenda on liquor licensing in New Zealand was disturbed in 1949,[1] when electors were asked in addition to vote on betting on horse racing, and on the hours for selling liquor, in March, and on compulsory military training, in August. In the December, 1949 issue of *Landfall* Professor N. C. Phillips examined the referendum in New Zealand and some special features of the military training issue. He held that the Labour party, then in power, was driven by internal divisions to submit the matter to the people. During the referendum the Government freely used 'the machinery of the State', for instance to give the case for compulsory training the lion's share of broadcasting time. The Opposition also supported the proposal.

The 1957 referendum, unlike the 1949 referenda mentioned above, will be held at the same time as the general election. Furthermore, in contrast to the military training measure, it may be assumed that in 1957 the propaganda for and against, including radio time, will be about evenly balanced. The story of how the capital punishment issue acquired referendum status can be told quite briefly. The death penalty was abolished in New Zealand in 1941 by an Act of the Labour Government; in fact no convicted murderer had been hanged since the party came into office in 1935. At the 1949 election the National Party stated that, if it were returned to office, a free vote would be taken on the death penalty. The party won the election, and in 1950 there was a free vote on the subject; one government supporter, Mr Hanan, voted against restoration, another, Mr Aderman, would also have voted against, had he not been unavoidably absent. No Labour member voted to re-impose the death penalty.[2] A private (Labour) member's bill for abolition introduced in 1955, was debated, but the discus-

[1] There was, moreover, no referendum on liquor at the time of the 'early' 1951 election.

[2] For a general discussion of free voting and cross-voting, see R. N. Kelson, 'Voting in the New Zealand House of Representatives', *Political Science*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Sept. 1955).

sion was interrupted, without a vote being taken. The same member introduced another bill in 1956; the Prime Minister followed him in the debate, and moved that the question of the retention of capital punishment be submitted to a referendum.

Numerous reasons for holding the referendum were given by government speakers. Perhaps it is realistic to begin with what was probably the main reason among them, and certainly one dictated by party strategy. There is an obvious distinction between this referendum and the one on military training in 1949. The Labour Government's object in putting the latter measure to the people was to effect a change in the law without breaking up the party. But in 1956 the National Government, overwhelmingly favourable to the death penalty, proposed to give the people the chance to abolish it in 1957. The Government's principal reason for acting in this apparently odd way was no doubt to try and extricate the issue from party politics with minimum loss. In 1949 it offered a free vote on capital punishment, but the very fact that it *was proposing to raise the issue* made the subject still, to some degree, a party one. It was widely believed that the National Party won votes on it, helped by public reaction to the gruesome Mount Victoria murder, which occurred shortly before the 1949 election. On the other hand, the Labour Party had abolished the death penalty in 1941 and was known to be still opposed to it, although abolition had not actually been mentioned in its 1954 election manifesto.

A possible way of taking the issue out of party politics was once more to allow a free vote. But the Government now believed that there had not been a *genuine* free vote allowed on the Labour side in 1950, and that one would not be permitted this time. Without inside knowledge it is impossible to test the claim that a Labour free vote would not have been 'really' free. An English psychologist has recently attempted to link political beliefs with 'toughmindedness' or 'tendermindedness'. On his argument, Labour members would incline towards tendermindedness and National members to toughmindedness. Certainly, pacifism is a trait associated more with Labour than with National politicians. A priori, the same broad alignment might be expected on capital punishment. Indeed, a Labour member stated in Parliament that one of the reasons he belonged to the party was because of its stand on the death penalty. Of course, even if this general tendency exists, it does not follow that there are no exceptions. But, quite apart from whether discipline would have been imposed on the Labour side in the event of a free vote, Labour members were perhaps naturally

more 'homogeneous' on this issue. Strikingly, in the February, 1956 free vote on capital punishment in the British House of Commons, 48 Conservatives were for abolition, and only 8 Labour members for retention.

However, it is not necessary to assume that National members were *correct* in saying that in 1956 a free vote would not be allowed to Labour members. It is enough to assume that they genuinely *believed* this. In the event of a vote, the party's 'theoretical' majority of 9 would then have fallen to 5, if Mr Hanan and Mr Aderman had voted for abolition. If some National members elected since 1950 were also hostile to the death penalty, the majority might have been even smaller. In that event, there would have been redoubled pressure from abolitionists, convinced that their cause was gaining ground, and the issue would have remained, unsettled, to plague the Nationalists. A future vote in Parliament for abolition would be welcomed by Labour as a party victory; the National party, once it had allowed its members a free vote, could not claim a similar advantage from a vote for retention. It is not remarkable, therefore, that, in the words of the Prime Minister, the Government Party met a number of times, and gave 'most anxious consideration' to the problem.

Nevertheless, signposts were not lacking to show the way out. In the 1955 debate on capital punishment it was hardly surprising that Mr Hanan suggested a referendum, although it was remarkable that the proposal was enthusiastically supported by a Labour member, Miss Howard. Mr Holland is himself quite referendum-minded: in 1948 he favoured using it on the second chamber question and, as mentioned below, later in 1956 he expressed approval of a 'constitutional referendum'. Finally, the Labour precedents of 1949 were so recent that the Labour party could not argue against the new proposal without having to make some apparently finely drawn distinctions. Therefore, viewed as a device for extricating the issue from unfavourable playing conditions in the House, the proposal was undeniably neat.

A further observation is relevant. The 1949 referendum on military training resulted from Labour party discipline being insufficiently strong to enable the party, inside and outside Parliament, to act together. Moreover, the issue was a party political one, in that, by submitting it to a referendum, the Government laid itself open to the charge of shirking its responsibilities. The situation in 1956 was different. The issue was one of conscience, which could, in some circumstances, have been left to a free vote. However, the issue also had its political aspects, and the Government

was driven to hold a referendum because of the *strength* of Labour discipline, or at any rate likemindedness, on capital punishment inside Parliament. So the Government cannot be accused of evading its responsibility to govern. The main criticism of its action must be that it transferred the decision on a complex moral question from a relatively knowledgeable body, Parliament, to a relatively uninstructed body, the electorate.

It would be tedious to recount the arguments used in the past in favour of the referendum, already admirably summarized by Professor Phillips. But in two respects New Zealand referenda differ from those in most other democracies. In Switzerland and the United States, where referenda grow thickest, an outstanding species is the referendum for altering a constitution. This has never been used in New Zealand, not even for important changes, such as the introduction or abolition of the country quota. For a brief moment, in August, 1956, it seemed that this variety might be introduced. Mr Holland announced that the provisions of the new electoral law, on boundaries and other matters, would, after enactment, be submitted to a referendum. The proposals became law, with Opposition approval, but nothing more has been heard about the referendum suggestion.[1] Secondly, most referenda in democratic countries, if they are not constitutional referenda, are set in motion by an agency other than the government, for instance by a voters' petition. But, in New Zealand, there is no legal machinery by which electors can originate a referendum, and the 'extraordinary' referenda, 1949-1957, have all been brought about by governmental initiative; the timing has been the government's; the wording has been, or will be, the government's. Dicey favoured the use of the referendum because it would help to weaken the power of party. But in New Zealand it has now been established as a government party weapon.

The remaining reasons given for holding a referendum on capital punishment fall under five main heads: that the issue will in this way be settled for some time; that both the supporters and opponents of capital punishment believe they will gain a majority; that the question is capable of being answered, 'yes' or 'no'; that the issue is a moral one; that the method is 'truly democratic'.

The reason that a referendum will settle the issue for some time is clearly linked with the considerations of party advantage, pre-

[1] True, one way in which the entrenched provisions of this 1956 Electoral Act may be *altered* is by referendum. But Mr Holland's original suggestion, that the provisions of the *Act itself* be put to a referendum, has not been carried out.

viously discussed. Obviously, the Government is tired of having the subject come up again and again, and it is undesirable that the law should be altered with every change of government. The argument then turns on whether the referendum result will, in fact, be accepted for long. Perhaps, if the majority is big enough. But the more accustomed the public becomes to frequent referenda, the less will be its reverence for *previous* referendum decisions. Perhaps even our liquor licensing polls are assuming the proportions of an orgy. Consequently, there is much to be said for limiting referenda to constitutional questions, thus investing constitutional matters with special importance.

That both supporters and opponents think they will win the referendum is hardly a sufficient reason for holding one. Public feeling on the matter is admittedly an important consideration, but it is not the *only* one. The questions remain whether it is easy to discover, by referendum, the state of public feeling on a subject, and whether it is well-informed or not. In other words, are the third and fourth reasons, given above, convincing?

The abolition of the death penalty cannot be satisfactorily put to the people in a form requiring a 'yes' or 'no' answer. Without favouring outright abolition, a voter may believe that the death penalty should be retained only for a few specific categories of murder. This was acknowledged by the Prime Minister when he announced the decision to hold a referendum; he said he was uncertain whether the voters should also be asked whether a person who murdered a policeman or warder in the execution of his duty should in any case be entitled to a reprieve. Even with this additional question, the voters surely need to be given on the ballot at least one other important piece of information—the alternative to capital punishment. 'Life imprisonment' does not always mean imprisonment for life, and votes on the abolition of the death penalty might differ according to the length of the alternative sentence. Consequently, if it is to mean very much, the referendum must be more elaborate than a single simple question, which can be answered 'yes' or 'no'.

Superficially, capital punishment seems to be an outstanding example of a moral question. But it is an extraordinarily complex moral question. It cannot be properly decided without mastering a mass of evidence, much of it legal or medical. *Do* statistics from all over the world indicate that capital punishment is a deterrent? How long can a man be kept in prison, as an alternative to capital punishment, before he deteriorates hopelessly? Drink, betting on racing and the death penalty for murderers may all be 'moral'

questions, but a decidedly higher proportion of electors has personal knowledge of the first two than of the third. The recent British Royal Commission on Capital Punishment took four years to hear evidence and produce a report; the nearest New Zealand approach to this was a Parliamentary Select Committee which sat eight times over a period of eight weeks in 1950. However seriously the New Zealand voters may reflect on the moral aspects of the problem, they simply cannot know enough about it, at any rate by the end of 1957, to make an intelligent decision. It has also been pointed out by the New Zealand Howard League for Penal Reform and by the National Committee for the Abolition of the Death Penalty that the 1957 voters may easily be swayed emotionally in favour of capital punishment if, as in 1949, a sufficiently revolting murder happens shortly before polling day.

The final reason for a referendum, that the method is 'truly democratic', was of course too unsophisticated to be voiced in Parliament by speakers of the calibre of the Prime Minister or the Attorney General. Nevertheless, it was used. The reply must surely be that the argument is capable of extension to all questions now dealt with in Parliament. It would entail the disappearance of Parliament and the replacement of representative democracy by direct democracy.

It is not for an academic to predict the result of a referendum. Presumably, however, one element in the Government's decision to propose the 1957 referendum, and one consideration moving the Labour party to oppose it, may have been the belief that the death penalty would be sustained. The antagonism of the Howard League and other organizations opposing the death penalty may also indicate that they were not hopeful that abolition would triumph.

The main reason given by the Government for holding the referendum at the same time as the election was that more people would vote on the issue than if they were held separately. This argument was supported by the low voting figures for the 1949 referenda, held before the general election. However, this is not quite the end of the matter. When referenda are held at the same time as general elections, voting for the two may be quite independent. This is probably true of the three-yearly voting on liquor licensing in this country. But, no doubt, one motive, apart from haste, for keeping the military training referendum separate from the general election in 1949, was a fear lest the Labour party 'split' on conscription might damage the Labour vote for the House of Representatives. Alternatively, a separate referendum on a topic where party divisions are fairly clear-cut may almost turn into an

election on which party to trust, as did the Australian referendum of 1951. It is not easy to say just how much the 'hanging' issue will haunt political platforms towards the end of 1957. Conceivably, just as in the U.S.A. a candidate sometimes drags a less popular colleague into office on his coat-tails (the coat-tail effect), if the referendum poll were in favour of capital punishment, it might help to 'pull' the National Party into office by a narrow margin. In that event, the phenomenon might be termed the 'rope's end effect'.

In conclusion, it is clear that the proposal for a referendum was, at the least, good political tactics for the National Party. The Government has not shirked the responsibility to govern, because it is quite legitimate to treat capital punishment as a moral issue which should be divorced from politics. There was nothing unethical about the proposal, nor is there any reason to believe that the referendum will not be conducted fairly. Possibly, but by no means certainly, voting on the referendum might affect voting for the House of Representatives, conceivably to the National Party's advantage. Nevertheless, most of the arguments given in favour of holding the referendum are unconvincing. There is a limit to the number of referenda that can be borne by the voters; the present issue is not nearly so straightforward as the Government claims. The electors know little about the complexities of capital punishment, nor is it likely that they will know much more by the time they cast their votes. Their attention will inevitably have been diverted from the great truth, which relates to the use of the referendum,—'whatever assigns to the people a power which they are naturally incapable of wielding takes it away from them'.

Commentaries

ROY DANIELLS

Canadian Letter

SELDOM have we had a year of smaller literary achievement and of more extensive plans for the future of literature than the year which has just passed.

For at least a generation, writers and critics have been saying in tones ranging from anger to wistfulness that financial support for the arts would alone bring about a renaissance. From what has transpired this year, it is clear that such a belief will now be put to the test.

After prolonged negotiations—in which Frank Scott, who led the organization of the Kingston conference of writers in 1955, again played a prominent part—the Rockefeller Foundation produced a generous grant which will make possible four or five fellowships a year to writers, for the next three years: $2700 to single applicants and $4000 to the married. Virtually no strings are attached to these fellowships: the one stipulation is that the writer who thus secures a little leisure, or if he wishes it a chance to travel, should get on with his writing. Poets, playwrights and novelists are eligible and, up to a point, critics, but not writers whose chief interest is in work for radio or television. Younger rather than established candidates are given preference. The grant is administered by the Canada Foundation, which has for many years helped writers and artists from a limited fund made up of voluntary subscriptions.

The search for suitable candidates has raised many questions, aside from the main issue. How in this country is one to define an 'established' author? Why is the novelist of forty so often still 'promising'? Why are so many first successes never followed by further works of comparable merit? Where are the Canadian playwrights? Can a young writer with a dramatic sense avoid engulfment in the whirlpool of radio and TV? Are we still losing active and enterprising writers to the U.S.? At what point do these become irrevocably lost to us? And criticism: is there anything

like a distinctive Canadian school? How is it that an Englishman writing of Flaubert or Virgil may well sense that he is contributing to his own tradition by this act, while a Canadian writing of Melville or Coleridge can seldom feel anything of the kind?

The eclipsing event of the past year, however, has been the definite promise of a Canada Council. On 13 November 1956, addressing in Ottawa a conference on higher education, the Prime Minister pronounced the long-expected phrases: 'We are now prepared to recommend the creation of the Canada Council to Parliament at its next regular session.' The Council is to be 'as independent as possible from the government'; is to have an endowment of $50 millions the income from which will give it an annual means of financing its activities; is to have another $50 millions at its disposal for distribution to the universities in the form of capital grants over the next ten years. Once more is apparent the close relation in the Canadian pattern of thinking between the arts and the universities. The Canada Council has since (in January) been formally presented to Parliament for debate and its personnel is at the moment of writing still in process of selection.

(The debate in Parliament revealed general agreement as to the value of a Council, with the exception of a speech by the leader of the Social Credit party who dissented, saying, 'I do not profess to be cultured. I am afraid that I have missed it by a good long way,' and going on to praise the culture of negroes in the Southern States, our own Eskimo in the far north, and French-Canadian families in the back concessions of Quebec, all of whom in his view had shown us how to achieve culture without government assistance, the Eskimo having developed 'one of the highest cultures known to civilization'!)

At the turn of the year appeared another proof of our preoccupation with the cultural needs of the country. A proposal originating with Professor C. F. Klinck of the University of Western Ontario was circulated to interested persons across the breadth of the country, calling for a Literary History of Canada, a massive production which will take, it is thought, five years to compile. Professor Klinck is undoubtedly on the right track when he advocates not a 'history of literature' but a 'literary history' and goes on to explain, 'The latter interprets Canadians in terms of the literary vision of those who have written here. We have never had such a study of ourselves and I think it would be worthy of the best efforts of our scholars. It could be solidly based on a substantial body of Canadian writing, much of which would thus receive its first critical examination. Even if the works written in

this country had no other value, they would still serve to reveal the Canadian mind.' This is indeed a modest proposal and its begetter—whose interest in these matters extends back for thirty years—is right in insisting that our primary need is not evaluation of works in aesthetic terms but a solidly constructed account of what has happened and, in historical terms, why it happened. That this must be the product of team work and that the chief editor's task will be that of co-ordination is another of the proposals with which few will disagree and so also for the flexibility with which Professor Klinck meets the need for French-Canadian participation, leaving experience to determine the degree to which actual interplay between the two languages and the two disciplines can be achieved. (No mention that I can discover is made of the language of publication, whether, for example, two complete editions, one in French and the other in English are envisaged.)

Amid these bewilderingly systematic schemes for the encouragement of literature, it is sad to record that 'the bloody horse' has not exactly taken wing or even reared violently. Yet the year has not been quite uneventful.

It is always a wild hope that somewhere in this scattered and confusing community there may exist whole groups of young writers ready to burgeon forth the next time the ice goes out of the Great Lakes and that most likely in the universities these 'young buds sleep at the root's white core'. It is therefore a public service that Dents has performed in bringing out *New Voices*, containing some fifty poems and stories, in French and English, from nearly twenty colleges and universities in all parts of the country, the work of students none older than twenty-five. The prose is the less rewarding, though there is abundance of adroit construction and well realized descriptive passages together with much understanding of the sorrows of children and simple souls; in other words there is talent in plenty but not much sign of fresh individual minds. On the other hand, some of the verse is excellent, even when plainly derivative, and the best of it has real intensity and authenticity. One can but speculate why this should be so, noting that of the three best poets one has spent some time in a monastery, another has been taught the craft of verse by Robert Graves, and the third found a sense of vocation by serving as an attendant in an asylum:

> I lie among my charges no more great
> Who grieved them with transgressions; their large hate
> Spilled, pillows me hard. Stillness will pay

With pardons; an unprayed ardour now I lay
In your lap and looking upward am sufficed
To see over your scorned brow thorns' array
And in your eyes the undisguiséd Christ.

So one feels the waters rising behind the great dams which contain the collective feelings of this Canadian world. Our need for expression in the arts has become conscious in the most unexpected places and vocal in the strangest contexts. Once more the Prime Minister's speech of last November is relevant and revealing: 'A distinct and strong national economy (he said) has been built up in Canada through the strengthening and development of our regional economies and the establishment of complementary trade relations between them which are vital to their respective progress . . . . I think it is now time for our cultural development to parallel what has taken place in the economic field.' The achievement of culture by act of will which this seems to imply has been the target of cheap wits in the newspapers, but it is in the large perspective both understandable and admirable. For the same condition of dispartition within and dependence upon cultural centres without which bedevilled the country in its struggle to become an economic unit now retards the movement toward cultural unity and makes us envy the readers of *Landfall* in New Zealand their natural cultural cohesion. Into the forging of Canadian unity a long process of conscious and probably laborious effort is bound to enter.

An odd exception to the prevailing course of writing is found in the younger generation of Jewish writers. Here indeed there seeps in the vitality and artistic assurance of an old tradition and its invigorating effects during the past year have been widely apparent. Two books are of especial interest.

Adele Wiseman, a Winnipeg girl in her mid-twenties, produced *The Sacrifice*, a novel of Jewish life. We see a family from the Ukraine which comes to Canada and proceeds, through the lives of two generations, to adjust itself to the new conditions while still fostering an intense family and almost tribal life. It is a genuinely rich and complex piece of writing, with a revelation of many Jewish minds within an immemorial way of life and beneath the enduring precepts of an ancient wisdom: 'When a human being cries out to you, no matter who it is, don't judge him, don't harm him, or you turn away God himself.'

The best poetry of the year was also from a distinctively Jewish pen. Irving Layton collected over eighty of his best poems, from chapbooks and other sources and published them as *The Improved*

Binoculars. They are of uneven value and certain of his preoccupations wearisome (the reader of Layton, it has been said, gets as tired of buttocks as the reader of the Georgians of buttercups), but his vigour and freshness are nevertheless undeniable and he contrives to sound always like himself. He writes 'On Seeing the Statuettes of Ezekiel and Jeremiah in the Church of Notre Dame',

> I shall not leave you here incensed, uneasy
> among alien Catholic saints
> but shall bring you from time to time
> my hot Hebrew heart
> as passionate as your own, and stand
> with you here awhile in aching confraternity.

BRUCE MASON

The Cherry Orchard

The Cherry Orchard? By students? Sauce! What can Margaret Walker be thinking of? Does she *want* to come a cropper, dashed earthward by wings casually fastened with sellotape? I reckoned without her skill, and given her skill, without Chekhov. Far from sticking wings on, Miss Walker grew them, and remained airborne throughout a memorable evening. And so of course, did we, watching this fine production. And this is an enormous achievement. It can be said of some plays, notably the great Shakespearean tragedies, that whoever tackles them, some greatness survives, because the drama of these plays lies explicitly in the poetry, and if the words are spoken clearly, the play is viable. But the plays of Chekhov are a different matter. The drama does not reside in the words alone, but in the revealed and implicit relationships of the characters, both with each other, and on different levels of their own personalities; the play becomes viable only by the evocation of an atmosphere sometimes as subtle and evanescent as a crystal goblet lightly touched, the expiring sound of the muted harpstring which closes *The Cherry Orchard*. Its harmonies are not those of a great orchestra, but of a small group of solo string players, whose

simultaneous sounding produces the keenest *douceurs*, the subtlest dissonances. Not for amateurs, in short, not I would have thought, for students. A poor production of this play can be an unrelieved torture of total blankness. But Miss Walker showed by her production just where her exceptional gifts lie, not in the play of large exterior passion which she has sometimes attempted, *The Crucible*, for example, and *The House of Bernarda Alba*, for Unity Theatre, but the play of complex personal relationships, and the sensitive revelation of an inward poetry. *The Cherry Orchard* shows us that her skill in this field is without peer in Wellington, and it may be, in the country.

Miss Walker could not give us the tarnished splendour of an old house falling on ruinous days, and therefore, wisely made no attempt at it. What her designer produced, however, was entirely appropriate, a highly stylised, but most evocative series of cutouts; opposing single flats with the suggestion of a padded baroque wallpaper, a majestic sofa, an imposing cupboard; backstage, a cutout of a noble window with a hint of great distance: everywhere hints, which broadened by the rapt and skilful players, allowed our imagination to expand to complete statements.

Her student cast gave themselves to their author with a most touching intelligence. It was not that their performances were of professional competence, though three were most accomplished; it was the fidelity of their attachment to the play which made so irresistible a success of the evening. They evoked the world of muted grief, of slipshod lives suddenly leaping to the shores of poetry and as quickly subsiding, the moments of incongruous farce which unaccountably emerge to blunt the edge of tragedy: this is the Chekhovian element, with its strange and ever more vivid correspondences to our own fearful, waiting, half-world.

Of performances, I shall mention three. Miss Elizabeth Gordon gave to Liubov Andryeevna Ranyevskaia the one quality by which this very difficult role stands or falls, a rueful tenderness. It takes a great actress to give us Madame Ranevsky in her fullness, but whatever her range and power, she must start from this indispensable essence. Miss Gordon managed it, and beautifully maintained it throughout. Mr Colin Bickler, Gayev, suggested most adroitly the child hiding behind the sophisticated man and contrived at once to be a symbol of authority without the power to hold it, and a crumpling, defenceless boy. His transition from one aspect to the other was most skilful. Mr David Vere-Jones, aged, I understand, twenty-one, gave us an eighty-seven year old Feers. I cannot too warmly commend this remarkable performance for the precision

of its style, the excellence of its taste, and the absolute avoidance of every hint of old-man cliché. He adopted a voice which seemed to have been dredged through generations of cold, and a stoop which rarely allowed us to see his eyes, so that when we did, it had the force of illumination. Yet these three players did not stick out of the play like sore fingers: they were merely the most completely realized characters in a cast everywhere serious and devoted to their task.

DOROTHEA TURNER

The National Orchestra's Finance

THE cost of the National Orchestra has been questioned with tiresome regularity over the last ten years. Perhaps these onslaughts have never much imperilled the Orchestra, but they do not help its work. The defence has often been no more intelligent than the attack, and sometimes more alarming. If the facts had been properly put to the public, most of these troubles might have been avoided. What I offer here is a brief for anyone who wishes to argue the Orchestra's case. The figures are taken from public sources.

The original forecast of the Orchestra's annual cost was £40,000. The cost in its first full working year, 1947-8, was £46,000. More ambitious travel and overtime brought the figure to £82,000 by 1950. Better organization reduced this by nearly £20,000 for a while, and its climb back to last year's £82,000 has been reasonably in line with the general rise in costs.

This is still a very cheap orchestra for what it does. It travelled close on 10,000 miles last year and gave 101 concerts. Many of the centres where it plays are too small for this type of concert to hope to make a profit. If the whole population of New Zealand lived in one city, that city would be the size of Glasgow, and its

orchestra would still be needing much money beyond the takings at the door. That popular orchestra, the Halle, living in a closely-settled district, has to find an extra £30,000 a year. So does the Yorkshire Symphony. The London Philharmonic receives £30,000 from the London County Council. All around the world the story is the same, except that some countries take it for granted.

The Orchestra took £24,000 at the door last year. The rest of its expenses are paid out of N.Z.B.S. income and not, it must be stressed, out of the pockets of the taxpayer. The N.Z.B.S. has other commitments heavier than the Orchestra, and for some reason less agitating to the public.

The Post Office will send the N.Z.B.S. a bill for about £100,000 this year 'for license fee collection and ancillary services'. If the N.Z.B.S. took to sending out bills, it could begin by charging the Education Department £20,000, for twenty concerts at £1,000 each, given by the Orchestra to school children. Or it could ask the parents to pay. It is doubtful whether the children value the Orchestra more for being free, like their lessons, rather than in the category of treats paid for, such as lectures by Sir Edmund Hillary and visits to *Richard III*, *Twelfth Night* and Victoria de los Angeles.

The N.Z.B.S. is paying over £100,000 a year income tax on the surplus of its commercial activities. The surplus comes from the operations of the commercial stations. The *New Zealand Listener* is classed in the accounts as a commercial activity. The National Orchestra is not. It is a nice distinction. The *New Zealand Listener* had a small deficit last year which was allowed as a deduction from the taxable surplus of the N.Z.B.S.'s commercial activities. The running costs of the Orchestra were not so allowed. The 1956 annual report of the N.Z.B.S. speaks plaintively about this method of taxation, and hints that unless it can be revised, licence fees may be increased. At the time of writing, no such revision has been announced. If, and when, the Orchestra's costs are more equitably assessed, the change should be given full publicity so that long-standing popular misconceptions may quickly die.

The Society of Registered Music Teachers in conference in 1955 forwarded the timely request that references to deficits or losses should be replaced by the phrase 'net cost' when the Orchestra was being discussed. The phraseology of discussion has improved lately, and Mr Algie's recent statements have been sturdy. But the terms 'loss' and 'deficit' with their implications still dog the Orchestra. The issue is simple and should be put simply to the House on the next occasion: if the Orchestra has a 'deficit' it is a commercial activity and the N.Z.B.S. is paying about £40,000 too much income

tax, and if the Orchestra is not a commercial activity it can have only a 'cost'.

There is no apparent way of reducing the Orchestra's expenses. Salaries, allowances and advertising are modestly scaled. Only a moderate increase can be looked for in its income. Admission tickets are cheap, but a substantial increase here might defeat itself. Profit lies in playing more often on each visit to the larger centres, and in filling the halls. To some extent this will come about naturally as population grows, but it will depend mainly on the interest of the playing. It is inept to continue to economize on guest conductors and on the salary of the resident conductor. In Auckland the difference between a full and a half-full Town Hall is about £300, which would go a long way towards paying for the varied and authoritative conducting this centre requires. The salaries paid to short-term conductors, whether guest or resident, should be based on what talent can command at the top of the world market. One of the dangers of state control is that a conductor's salary may be related to other public service salaries, instead of to the realities of his own profession.

As no dramatic changes can be looked for under the present system of finance, various changes in the system itself have been put forward. The most vivid came, as one would expect, from Mr Bowles, who said that three-quarters of 1% of what we spend on the Tote would keep the Orchestra nicely. As indeed it would if we looked on money placed on the Tote as spent; but it is an investment and expected to come right back with increase.

There is a fallacy, too, in Mr Robertson's proposition that the Orchestra be credited with fees of £200 to £400 for each broadcast. As the N.Z.B.S. supports the Orchestra, it is surely entitled to broadcast it free. But Mr Robertson's scheme does bear on the solution I propose. If the Orchestra were managed by a state committee outside the N.Z.B.S., it would as a matter of course charge for concert broadcasts, and studio broadcasts, and school concerts. The committee and the N.Z.B.S. programme staff would have to come to terms about the worth of each broadcast instead of pouring all freely through the air. Listeners could no longer take so much for granted.

On first sight there may be no difference between paying for the Orchestra out of one state fund rather than another, but the results could be very different. The Orchestra now pays full rates for everything it uses; no individuals, groups or town councils stir themselves to help it. They are not likely to so long as it is part of the N.Z.B.S., which has of necessity grown into a large, imper-

sonal concern. As is usual when units combine for power and efficiency—as we have seen in hospital boards, school boards and borough councils—the resulting organization becomes 'they' instead of 'we', loses local and voluntary support, and loses finesse in some of its more complex dealings. Separate management could, I am sure, touch local good will up and down the country, winning help and concessions for the Orchestra. A state fund would give the Orchestra security, and the balance of its expenses would be increasingly met by people who came to feel attachment and personal responsibility.

Reviews

APOCALYPSE IN SPRINGTIME AND OTHER POEMS. Lex Banning. *Edwards and Shaw*. 10s. 6d.

THE HEXAGON. Hal Porter. *Angus and Robertson*. 15s.

A VISION OF CEREMONY. James McAuley. *Angus and Robertson*. 15s.

THE MIRACLE OF MULLION HILL. David Campbell. *Angus and Robertson*. 15s.

AUSTRALIAN POETRY, 1956. Selected by A. A. Phillips. *Angus and Robertson*. 12s. 6d.

Across the Tasman, it is clear, there is at the moment something of a boom in poetry, with Messrs Angus and Robertson acting as very assiduous midwives. Few volumes of verse have lately appeared in New Zealand, while some that have been awaited are long overdue. In Sydney the production line is apparently smoother; these books are all well produced, with solid bindings and attractive wrappers, and very moderately priced. New Zealand libraries, booksellers, and publishers, please note.

What about the quality of the contents? Here a reviewer, treading delicately in the steps of Mr M. K. Joseph (who in the last number of *Landfall* was somewhat severe about the Australian Muse or Oracle, and noted a boom of another kind) may, I think, be mildly enthusiastic. I propose to play this hand from weakness to strength, using last year's representative anthology as a final yard-stick.

The most elegant volume here is Mr Banning's *Apocalypse*, with

a charming unicorn to set it off on the title page. These are polished, literary verses, gracefully patterning a short-breathed lyrical impulse. Nothing of a ragged continent obtrudes, though there is a neat enough little etching of 'Hobart', and a diverting glimpse of Captain Phillip through the wrong end of a telescope. This seems to me the first book of a talented amateur with a sense of style, but without as yet an assured style of his own. One is reminded of the Canadian Wilfred Watson—the sort of poet Mr Banning might perhaps become, given time and scope.

Mr Porter is a very different cup of tea—though he would probably scorn such a beverage. At first sight, *The Hexagon* might seem to herald the emergence of an Australian Roy Campbell—a wild swashbuckling *rhétoriqueur* from the deep south. But Mr Porter is ill served by an effusive blurb, which claims for him 'clarity of vision and precision of image', as well as 'impeccable rigidity of form'. This is just what he has not got. We may grant the 'evocative and sensual imagery' and the 'exhilarating vocabulary'—in all his sound and fury there is a genuine intoxication with words; and from his clanging anvil a few striking phrases fly off—'Jenolans of anger'; 'too lent, too leached, too late'; (the prostitutes) 'with cut and ferret smiles'. Sometimes a linked chain of rhetoric is forged, as in 'Maatsuyker Island'.

> Again the lariat of sight unfurled
> loops in parabolas the crinkling plain:
> hear! from the last veranda of the world
> the manifesto of the stallions' pain . . . .

And Mr Porter has a real flair for the macabre, as in this stanza from 'Brute's Wife':

> Yet his beast eyes in her sons' sockets taunt her,
> her hairy twins smear jam-blood on the floor,
> the half-chewed doll lies X and stiff to haunt her . . .
> He enters, padding. Shuts the twilight door—

There is a bold attempt to explore private places into which Mr Louis Johnson, in this country, has penetrated with some success, and no loss of poetic decorum. But altogether, there is more than an echo here of the Australian 'big voice' Mr Joseph censures, and it is surprising (for a resolutely experimental writer) how often Mr Porter slips back into the rollicking, familiar rhythms of Kiplingesque ballad. One has a feeling that this poet may yet do something really significant in verse, and live to regret parts of the contents of his first volume.

With Mr McAuley we reach a serious, mature poet, with an assured world-outlook, a most accomplished technique, and a genuine literary vocation. I should describe him as a Parnassian with a social conscience, and must frankly admit that I prefer the

Parnassian to the Catholic apologist. The earliest work here—'The Hero and the Hydra', a rehandling of classical myth in the Rilke rather than the Bridges manner—seems to me a most remarkable achievement. In particular the 'vision of Ceremony' in Chorus III of his 'Prometheus' says with sustained eloquence, and something of Spenserian statelliness, much that in the 'Letter to John Dryden' becomes topical, acrimonious, and far too like a leading article in *The Tablet*. I cannot (pace Mr Joseph) see Mr McAuley as an effective satirist—he is too bookish, and in controversy is inclined to be petulant. But I admire the coolness and occasional incandescence of his lyrical pieces: his black swans are beguiling symbols that he has really made his own, and he is one of the few Antipodean poets who have written religious verse of real distinction.

For me, Mr David Campbell was the surprise, and a most enjoyable one. I did not know his earlier book, and knew him only by reputation as a 'grazier-poet' who once seemed likely to go (though in the end he did not) with Professor Fitzgerald's Australian party to China last year. That seems a pity, for he has a countryman's eye for animals, birds, weather and landscape, and something of the technical sophistication in verse that Mr Patrick White commands in prose. This is a combination we seem to have missed in New Zealand, to our own impoverishment—I remember only a couple of short poems by David Ellworthy in *Landfall* three years ago, which lightly tapped a vast poetic reserve in our own national life and experience.

Mr Campbell writes very finished little lyrics, sometimes with a really haunting music of their own: he has a sheaf of pastoral ballads that refine upon native ancestry—the nearest thing to Glover I have found in Australian verse. And he can handle country material in narrative that moves along briskly enough, with an enforced humour. A final section of this book deals, I feel rather less successfully, with that city-culture which is the inevitable counterpart to station life in Australia: but Mr Campbell is very much at home in both worlds.

A note for philologists: in all these four poets, words like 'lyre' and 'pure' and 'real' are made to become, under metrical stress, the equivalent of a full, and not a half foot: which seems to suggest that an Irish-Australian accent does exist in the mind, and does affect Australian verse rhythms.

Finally, *Australian Poetry*, 1956. Some forty poets are represented, most of them by a single piece. The poems by Campbell and McAuley seem to me among the best in the collection; A. D. Hope is impressive, as are Judith Wright and Harold Stewart. Among less familiar names, I liked especially the work of Elizabeth Riddell, Geoffrey Dutton, and Bruce Beaver. Most of this verse is technically accomplished, if a little unadventurous. I was aware of

no notable pressure or urgency behind it. But at least Australian poets write verses to one another, and maintain a sort of literary fraternity, with a reciprocity of interest and influence we do not seem to have here. Incidentally, no Marabar Caves boom in this anthology; Mr Porter is missing, and the voices here assembled are all urbane enough for a PEN collection in England. Discretion is not always a virtue. It would be a pity if Australian verse, in losing its bellow, also lost its bite.

James Bertram

THE AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH. A Picture of the Community 1901-55. Brian Fitzpatrick. *Melbourne*: *F. W. Cheshire*. 30s.

SINCE the appearance of *British Imperialism and Australia 1783-1833*, in 1939, Mr Fitzpatrick has built up a reputation for diligent scholarship seasoned with strong bias, an amalgam unique among Australian historians. Each of his five books has exhibited that peculiar combination of erudition and leftist partisanship which is now the recognized Fitzpatrick medium. To convey his very individual manner of viewing Australian history, Mr Fitzpatrick used a literary style notable for its curious union of vividness and obscurity. In his two volumes of economic history of Australia, he presented a mass of valuable information in a form and style which taxed the patience and concentration of even devout historians. His *History of the Australian Labor Movement*, and *The Australian People* had similar endurance-trying qualities and the weary reader was often bogged in a morass of facts and statistics. The persevering were, however, frequently rewarded with one of those audacious and illuminating remarks with which Mr Fitzpatrick is wont to spice his writing.

The Australian Commonwealth finds Mr Fitzpatrick still in his old dilemma, and those looking for mellowed impartial judgement will not find it here. Torn between polemic and academic history, he has solved the problems of neither in a book which is yet informative and interesting. This is the most entertaining of Mr Fitzpatrick's histories, and unlike his previous work, it is consistently readable. He sets out to give the general reader twelve chapters of narrative, picturing various aspects of the Australian community from 1901 to 1955. Then follow one hundred and ten very useful pages of Sources, Notes and Topics, intended primarily for scholars. It was the author's hope that the book would 'entertain and inform' readers, and this it certainly does. Regrettably the wish to entertain overwhelmed the needs of scholarship in many chapters. It would seem that there comes to the Australian historian's stage a new Fitzpatrick, impish, cynical, witty. He weaves

the wisdom of Wodehouse ('Uncle Fred in the Springtime') into an attack on the Australian security system, pokes acid and irrelevant fun at the Papacy, and delights in the recounting of a 'poignant quatrain' which illustrates, says our interpreter, official attitudes at the time of the rise to power of Hitler.

> The rain it raineth on the just
> And also on the unjust fella
> But chiefly on the just because
> The unjust steals the just's umbrella.

One is tempted to view this partiality for the clever quotation, firstly as too patently contrived, and secondly as a convenient escape from the laborious task of lucidly analysing a given situation and reaching some reasonable, or at least comprehensible conclusion.

This cleverness is specially galling when it is used to replace serious and necessary argumentation as in the comment on sectarianism on p. 173. The tentative, or alternatively dogmatic nature of many of Mr Fitzpatrick's conclusions may be deemed provocative, or merely infuriating. The chapter on the aborigines leaves an impression of ill-informed prejudice. While Mr Fitzpatrick's plea for justice is laudable, his seeming unwillingness or incapacity to consider the problems which he allows the Minister for Territories to raise, in quotation, deprives the chapter of any real worth.

The earlier chapters on the Land and the People, Australia's Home, Australian Speech and Australian Children are Mr Fitzpatrick at his best. They provide full scope for his brilliantly haphazard discursive treatment enlivened with penetrating judgements. He points out that the forty-hour week is now an illusion in a working community where overtime has become customary. He refutes with statistics the assertion that the children of today are inferior in stature and morals to those of earlier days.

When Mr Fitzpatrick enters the field of political history, his sympathies are with the workers as a class and with the individual oppressed by injustice. His chapters on Privilege, Proscription, Pride, and Prejudice, are all concerned with the freedom of the individual and of minorities. For long associated with the Australian Council for Civil Liberties, the author has a ready knowledge of case histories relating to the rights and liberties of the individual, from the I.W.W. trial in 1916, to the trial in 1955 of Fitzpatrick and Browne at the Bar of the House of Representatives. This review of civil liberties in Australia since 1914 makes engrossing reading. Mr Fitzpatrick outlines the history of the Commonwealth Security and Investigation Service. In tracing its beginnings to an incident in the 1917 Conscription campaign when an egg was thrown at W. M. Hughes, then Prime Minister, at Warwick in Queensland, the author adds another charge to his indictment of

Hughes which accompanies every reference to that politician. Mr R. G. Menzies emerges only slightly less spotted from Mr Fitzpatrick's treatment of the Petrov case, a treatment persuasively argued from a pro-Evatt point of view. Even more stringent criticism than that applied to erring politicians is reserved for the activities of Australian Catholics in politics. This is one subject, among others, upon which Mr Fitzpatrick appears incapable of dispassionate observation. His sneering appraisal of the reprehensible activities of Catholics within the Labour Party is too brief to indicate any real understanding of the subject and too dogmatic to be convincing. Yet Mr Fitzpatrick's remarks on the question of sectarianism are the fullest and most forthright to appear in a general Australian history, though his approach, as with the other current problems he discusses, is that of the controversialist, not of the historian.

It is as the controversialist that Mr Fitzpatrick excels. His evaluation of Australian cultural progress in his final section labelled 'Towards Civilisation?' lacks the fire of his political polemic. It has been said that for years many Australian historians have thrived on the confutation of Fitzpatrick. *The Australian Commonwealth* presents another formidable collection of crisp and audacious assertions to keep the upholders of the golden mean employed in judicious modification. Perverse, sarcastic, intolerant though it may be, the book is both informative and singularly provocative. Its faults are manifold and considerable, but it has the redeeming virtue of vivacity. Mr Fitzpatrick has left much unsaid, and what he has said is excessively coloured by his own prejudice. But he has had his moments of inspiration. If art and insight are two qualities to be sought by the historian, this writer lays strong claim to them with the concluding sentences of his book.

'The Australian people made heroes of none, and raised no idols, except perhaps an outlaw, Ned Kelly, and Carbine, a horse. But generation of them after generation, they fought with beasts at Ephesus—blight and drought, fire and flood; their own taskmasters and the covetous alien—and suffering their setbacks, still made of Australia a home good enough for men of modest report to live in, calling their souls their own.'

P. J. O'Farrell

Correspondence

To the Editor

Sir: In the intense mist of Maurice Shadbolt's prose I see a figure valiently shadow-boxing. I think the swings are aimed at me, but quite honestly I don't feel any of them connect. Could we just hold his wrists for a minute and explain one or two things?

1 I'm sorry I broke up the text of my review (of Doyle and Campbell) by quoting 'meaningless lines from a meaningful context' (a paradox here). But if I hadn't *illustrated* the qualities I thought to be bad I might have had some heavyweights to contend with.

2 Mr Shadbolt is probably right when he explains to me that poetry is made out of the great commonplaces. But I don't see what that has to do with my objection to inflation of a particular commonplace by a particular poet who, I believe, sometimes writes less precisely than he should.

3 In the matter of the time image Mr Shadbolt has a right to his opinion. But I cannot accept his theory that a poetic image is an unchallengeable 'personal view', and that hence I have no right to my opinion whatever image Doyle uses. If this were so, praise from Shadbolt would be as meaningless as blame from Stead. I prefer to believe that one of us is right.

4 I don't see any inconsistency in my statement that Campbell's lines are 'often clear and hard'. It seems to me clear enough from the text of my review that I meant 'often, but not often enough'.

5 Why should a reference to three editions be 'pointless in forming an assessment of Campbell's work'? If Campbell's verse is easily assimilated by unpractised poetry readers this, in conjunction with other facts, may help to define its quality.

6 I don't think it would be profitable to follow up Mr Shadbolt's journalistic references to 'new and difficult themes' (commonplaces?) and 'distinctive voices'. What matters first is whether the themes are satisfactorily adapted to verse, and whether the voice is 'distinctive' for worthwhile qualities.

C. K. Stead

Sir: Dr Duff, in his not unappreciative review of my book *Ancient Voyagers in the Pacific* in your March issue, concedes that there was a significant amount of accidental migration in the Pacific in prehistoric times, but argues that all the facts cannot be explained by what he calls 'involuntary drift voyages'. He suggests that the

presence of the Polynesians and their livestock and useful plants in their isolated islands betokens some element of purposive migration in a former age. Dr Duff, however, does not bring out the fact that voyages of random exiles, setting off purposively with their families and livestock and food plants, and coming fortuitously on other islands by one-way voyages, were an integral part of my evidence. When Captain Porter visited a Polynesian island in the early 19th century, he was told by a European who had been resident there for twelve years that during that time some 800 islanders had pushed off for vague lands of promise on voyages of no return in specially large canoes furnished with livestock and useful plants. Can Dr Duff really think that any purposive element that may possibly be evidenced by the botanical and cultural facts is not explained by so simple and straightforward an explanation?

Dr Duff also suggests that the geographical knowledge of the Tahitians at the time of Cook's first visit betokened diminishing memories derived from a former golden age of deliberate two-way voyaging. There is however no sign of knowledge of Hawaii, New Zealand or Easter Island in the names collected by Cook; nor does Dr Duff claim that there is. There are in fact only half a dozen Western Polynesian names, all of which could have been brought to Tahiti by one lot of accidental voyagers; and only one recognizable Marquesan name. It is surely a curious argument that cites geographical knowledge not extending to Hawaii, New Zealand and Easter Island in support of the view that deliberate two-way voyages took place.

Andrew Sharp

SIR: The reviewer's function, it seems to me, is to give a fair summary of an author's thesis and, where in addition he can claim some expert knowledge of the subject matter, to indulge in a purely personal assent or dissent.

The author's sharp reaction to what he concedes was a 'not unappreciative review' confirms my chief criticism of his book, namely that he would establish drift voyages as the only method of Polynesian discovery and settlement. As a partisan therefore he demands the agreement of every reviewer with this thesis, and challenges him to a debate, should the latter decline to accept his argument. I must however decline Mr Sharp's invitation to join in a debate in which I must always be wrong until I admit that he is right.

Roger Duff

NEW CONTRIBUTORS

Thomas Crawford. Born 1920 in Dundee; educated at Royal High School, Edinburgh, Dunfermline High School and Edinburgh University. War service in the ranks of the R.A.F. A teacher before emigrating to New Zealand in 1948. Has been Secretary-Organizer of the Auckland W.E.A., and is at present a lecturer in English at Auckland University College. Author of *The Edinburgh Review and Romantic Poetry* (A.U.C. monograph series). At work on a critical study of Burns.

R. S. Milne. Born in Paisley 1919. Educated at Glasgow Academy and The Queen's College, Oxford. Lecturer in Government, Bristol University, 1947-55; visiting lecturer, Ohio State University, 1953-4. At present Professor of Political Science, Victoria University College. Joint author of *Straight Fight* (The Hansard Society).

Margaret Walker. Born in Christchurch; is married to Robert McLuskie and lives in Wellington. Trained at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School and has had professional theatre experience in England. Produces and acts for Unity Theatre, Wellington.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

Journey to Outer Mongolia. A Diary with Poems. Rewi Alley. (Desunt caetera.)

The Iron Breadboard. Studies in New Zealand Writing. James K. Baxter. The Mermaid Press. 5s.

Since Then. Denis Glover. The Mermaid Press. 10s. 6d.

Writing in New Zealand. The New Zealand Short Story. Parts I and II. M. K. Joseph. Post Primary School Bulletin Vol. X nos. 7 and 8. 1956. School Publications Branch, Department of Education, Wellington.

Mr Explorer Douglas. Edited by John Pascoe. A. H. and A. W. Reed. 37s. 6d.

The Mind and Art of Coventry Patmore. J. C. Reid. Routledge and Kegan Paul. 35s.

Measuring Intelligence in New Zealand. Cyril A. Rogers. Auckland University College.

John Stuart Mill: the Man. Ruth Borchard. Watts. 18s.

Coast to Coast. Australian Stories 1955-6. Selected by H. Drake-Brockman. Angus and Robertson. 17s. 6d.

Search for a Purpose. Arthur E. Morgan. Watts. 15s.

The Child and the Outside World. Studies in Developing Relationships. D. W. Winnicott. Edited by Janet Hardenberg. Tavistock Publications. 16s.

Books Abroad. An International Literary Quarterly. Vol. XXXI no. 1. University of Oklahoma Press. $4 a year.

Meanjin. A Literary Magazine. Edited by C. B. Christesen. Vol. XVI no. 1. £2 a year.

Quadrant. An Australian Quarterly Review. Edited by James McAuley. Vol. I nos. 1 and 2. The Australian Committee for Cultural Freedom, 4s.

Notes

TWICE in the past *Landfall* has urged the creation in New Zealand of some such body as the British National Trust to mark, record, and if possible preserve, the rapidly disintegrating memorials of our brief history. The National and Historic Places Trust has recently been called into existence by the Government and is charged with the work of examination, recording and preserving. The whole organization is headed by Mr C. M. Bowden; its secretary is Mr John Pascoe, whose record as illustrations editor for the war history series augurs well for that side of the Trust's work. Regional committees have been set up throughout the country; they are presumably hard at work deciding what does, and what does not, constitute a monument; what may be, and what may not be, preserved. At this stage of its development, it would be unwise to do more than wish the Trust well. It may be hoped that its work will not be frustrated by either lack of money or imagination. Provision of the former is a responsibility of Government; the presence or absence of the latter depends upon the members themselves.

It is greatly to be hoped that the members of the Trust and its committees will be neither too narrow in their range nor too solemn in their endeavours. It would be almost purposeless if such a body, either through the parsimony of Government, or the limited vision of members, should be confined to the erection of obelisks on battlefields and the affixing of plaques on walls. *Landfall*, both in words and in illustrations, has called attention to monuments not the less worthy of respect because they lack obvious historical significance. There are, throughout the country, dwellings and shops, cemeteries and headstones, whose grace, calm, and sometimes extravagant fancy should be the more highly valued in a country prone both architecturally and intellectually to mediocrity. No cabinet minister was either born in them or buried under them; no embattled settlers prepared to fire upon the Maoris from them; no church, lodge or local body held its first meeting in them. People simply built them, and we are the richer for it. It would be hard to find any reason for affixing a plaque to them. But there is every reason for photographing them before they fall before the functional steel, concrete and glass of commerce, the inexorable brick and weatherboard of the suburbs. Such

a collection of photographs (and perhaps commissioned drawings and paintings) should at least be kept and displayed. Examples could well be reproduced in a periodical publication; elsewhere in this issue Mr W. J. Gardner makes a good case for his view that an historical journal might be among the more important ventures of the Trust.

Meanwhile, as if to warn us that no Trust can ever hope to preserve us from the worst excesses of the destructive mood, the Wellington Diocese of the Anglican Church is pressing ahead, impervious to the criticism offered by both architects and historians, with its plans to tear down a modest wooden church and erect in its place an eclectic nightmare of concrete and steel. That part of the old structure is to be bodily incapsulated in the new is small confort to those who acknowledge and respect the modest grace of a past generation of church builders.

The State Literary Fund Committee, in electing Mr E. H. McCormick as the first holder of the fellowship for authors which it recently created, has made a wise and sober choice. The thoroughness of his scholarship and the discrimination of his criticism have adorned our letters, our art and our history. His election sets the fellowship off to a sound and productive start.

W.H.O.

JAMES K. BAXTER

Four Poems

GREEN FIGS AT TABLE

'To eat a green fig, my dear,
Torn from the belly of unreason,
Honey white or brown when you open it,
The female parts, a story, or a poem—'
'Perhaps.'

'The taste sticks in one's mouth. Even now
Barometer wounds begin to throb, simply
Because you are a woman, woman in her rubbed flesh
Dressed for carnage—' 'I thought there was
a better name for it.'

'Action. Society as undertaker
Measures us for coffins, plugs up the orifices
By which pleasure might enter or pity escape.
Mothers admire the handsome corpse
That cost so little

To be tidied. They cover the rope mark on the throat.'
'You were talking of figs—' 'Yes, figs.
I would like to be, at length, Odysseus lounging
With loaf and winecup in the shade
Of his daughter the bent olive,

But I too roast in the brass bull
Of conscience, remembering at this autumn table
Women ganched in cupboards of the mind or
Geometrical on the black glaze of an urn—'
'I burn in waiting

For the sea to rise or the god to descend
And hear, in coffee shops, the mill of gossip turning.'
'Blood runs from my nail into the soya dish;
Oil boats rust, chained at darkened wharves.
One movement could shake

Us free, I think—' 'We should not say too much.
Enter, without knocking, the door of the fig.'

THE DESCENT OF ORPHEUS

SALLOW, small, with broken teeth,
Orpheus, no hero, going
Through lugs of stone to the unloving
Dungeon where all come to grief
To get back a lively wife:
Go on, go down, singing.

Bulgy Cerberus, opening
His six jaws, begins to whine.
Rub your knuckles on his spine.
Your song, loosed from the bowstring,
Whistles in his dog's brain:
'Meat, boy, bones and gravy!'

Old Tantalus, that proud tycoon
Licked by the law of averages,
Lets his pearl revolver drop,
Crushes the moment like a grape
Between his plate and sinewy tongue,
Soothed by your singing.

Grum Sisyphus, who takes to heart
All that ever happened,
Nudged by your singing,
Lets the stone of conscience spin
Savagely downhill
Among the mangroves crashing.
The drugged daughters of the well
Let their dribbling sieve spill,
In frilly skirts and sashes
Jive, rock-and-roll,
Prodded by your singing.

And when you find, behind her rock curtain,
A discontented wife in cerements
Laying a table for one: then
Like any boy in a railway arch
Hot under frogskin, coming to the clinch,
Sing: *Girl, girl, two apples on a branch*
Your breasts are, your sex a mine of sparrows.

THE CAKE SELLER

UNDER a darker sun
When time was all my own
In Deadman's Alley I lay down
Not thinking I would rise again,
But rose and walked the proud town,

Blind man of dirt and fellahin
In an old coat of flame.

There meeting one who made
Cakes for the travelling dead—
'Has death no end?' I questioned him.
'My taste is carrion.'

'Twice I have heard,' he said,
'Between new lust and old rage
The heart knock on its cage,
And the blow was foreign.'

'Who dealt it?'
'Our great enemy.'

'Where may he be found?'
'He has no home in this wide land.
Taste my bread. I kneaded it
Of dust and dead man's envy.'

SONG FOR A CHRISTMAS CRACKER

UNDER the sphinx's eye
My thirty-first year begun,
Can I say without a cough
Expecting you not to laugh—
Love me till I die,
Love me for what I am?
Terribly dangerous talk
Even if said in fun.

Once it was easy to know
Just who I was and how.
A boy from an early book,
I thought I must be he,
Who made the creeks run back
In their beds, and flounders fly,
With a left-handed magic
Not under the sphinx's eye.

The play could never be tragic,
He had good friends in the sky.
And when you came on stage
Your part was readymade,
In a loft at the top of a ladder
To blind the sphinx's eye,
To kiss on a thumping bed
And keep his powder dry.

Something went wrong with the plan
I looked for myself one day
And found this garrulous man.
Ageing, fat and vain,
With poems to his credit
And a bad actor's grin,
On his chest a badge of merit
Pinned with a rusty pin.

Then I looked round for you
And found a stranger there,
A woman I did not know
Combing her long black hair
Under the sphinx's eye.
Who I am I cannot say,
Who you are I do not know.
Love me till I die.

PETER BLAND

Three Poems

RIVER LAND

In summer-shrinking innocence this river
Wanders through groove and gravel-bed, as idly
As a half-formed thought traces the anguish

Of another's mind. But the vision enlarged, includes
Those black backwaters smooth as new-laid tar,
Pyres of driftwood (awaiting the martyrs' burning)
And ditches like empty graves. Fabric for a nightmare
Or deserted battlefield, wrecked by an ancient grievance.
No one has leased this landscape from the river
Since death and the first flood, falling like wolves
On the waking meadow, bled it beyond the surgery
Of barb and plough. Now, children privateer
Among the ruins, old men dig dreams and lovers
Locked in love's solitude, feel the rush of wings
Burst from their bodies ark in search of Ararat.

LYRIC

A POEM still-born, a kiss unsatisfied,
Can breed a plague of pity to felicitate
The dream's advantage. So that, it might have been,
My first grieved Juliet could flower into flesh,
Step from her balcony and share with me
Her still-imagined fire. It might have been,
But flesh has intervened to prove
A poem impotent, a kiss unjustified.

THE PICTURE GALLERY

Too many dimpled smiles embalm this tomb
Where leisured courtiers, laced with gems,
Sharing a haunt of immortality, await
The fable of a Prince's kiss to wake them.

A Princess wrapped in the myth of Diana
Smiles through a glade of revels; horses shy
At someone in the shade, a nymph or maid
Crushed in the evergreen grass assumes a sigh.

Trespassing time's privilege to choose its cast,
The visitor seems an immigrant to death.
Wandering with uneasy peace this catacomb of art
And wondering at the warmth of his own breath.

MAURICE GEE

In a Sleeping Face

I

FROM the diary of Bernard Lambourne.
March 1. A pleasant day. The heat softened now and then by a cool breeze. I walked round to the blowhole and was disappointed. There wasn't enough surf today to raise the water over the lip. Came in to tea to find the Gilmours had got under way all right. I now have a table to myself.

March 2. Morning. Took my weary old bones to the top of the hill and found that my memory hadn't been playing tricks. The view is still superb. In fact, since I could stand and gaze to my heart's content, it seemed even more magnificent than it had been from the bus. I know it now, from the dark blue shifting shadows over the sea to the skyline of the hills far inland. The beach, the sandhills, the lagoon and stream, the red roof of the hotel like a flower deep in the valley, the scrub on the hills above smoothed and run together by wind until it has the appearance of cobble-stones, these make a picture to remember. I have gained this from my holiday if I gain nothing else.
Evening. Still nobody at my table. They must know I prefer to be alone. The Irishman across the room puffs Social Credit. Mrs Travis the artist is shrill about various muddles, from world to table. Everyone else is quiet and polite. Noisiness is certainly the creature of youth. And perhaps it would be better if there were a few young people here. The pulse-beat of the diningroom is far from healthy I feel: old blood flowing sluggishly.

March 3. Well I am no longer alone and I don't know whether to be sorry or glad. My mealtime privacy is broken but I do have the young company I wished for yesterday. Miss Rose is her name—*not* a good name. Miss Sunflower would be better—except that she seems rather gloomy for a sunflower. Perhaps it is just shyness.

March 4. The blood is not so sluggish after all. Once upon a time my grand-daughter called me an extinct volcano, and she was *very*

nearly right. I make the reservation because women like Miss Rose, strong, round-bodied young women, fire a little spark in me that gives the lie, though feebly, to my grand-daughter's remark. Yesterday the spark was fired. I suppose it's foolish for an old man to look forward to his meals simply because he has a young and attractive table companion: particularly when the magic conversations consist wholly of phrases such as, 'Would you please pass the sugar'. She seems determined to say no more. However at my age I see no good reason for trying to curb the minor delinquencies of the blood. This little romance is just a product of my holiday mood. I'll puff now and then on that dying spark just to keep it alive.

March 5. Why is Miss Rose so gloomy? In three days I haven't seen her smile. I feel she should smile—I must surprise her into it. Her face is of the wide type that serious emotions make less attractive, the type that's softened only by laughter. And at one time laughter must have come easily to her for her voice has the rich tone that seems to verge always on a chuckle. There's some mystery in this. I find myself giving her a past. I wouldn't be surprised to learn that she's come here to recover from an unhappy love affair.

But *I* came for the sun and the quiet, not to concern myself with other people. I must stop worrying about this girl.

March 6. Well I have been living in a fool's paradise. My little romance is over. For three days I've been digging myself in the ribs and coming out with exclamations like, 'You sly old rascal, you,' etc. etc. and it all turns out to have been for nothing. When she rose from the table this morning and said, 'Excuse me,' I had no premonition that that was to be our last tête à tête. I simply nodded and went on eating my porridge. So Dame Life sneaks by with her tragic moments and won't let us shake them bravely by the hand or even look them in the eye. My young lady left the table still mysterious, almost the tragic young lover, not quite Miss Sunflower. I forgot I'd given up thinking about her. All morning I wondered how I could make her smile. And I came in for lunch and found she'd become a rather ordinary young pretty-miss.

I found her engaged in conversation with another woman. Love is a sensitive plant: it couldn't survive the regular black frost of small-talk.

But enough of Miss Rose. I must be serious. The woman she was talking to is Mrs Matthews. She and her son, who is about twelve years old, have been placed at our table. Her doctor prescribed this

holiday for her nerves which, she tells us, are so jangly that sometimes the slightest noise is enough to make her cry. Her husband couldn't leave his business so the boy was given two weeks off school to keep her company. She is a small woman, small-boned, with wrists and arms thin almost to deformity. Her face is long and unlined, the skin clear and drawn tight over the nose so that one isn't quite sure that the whiteness along the bone line isn't the bone itself. The lips are full and have a nervous twitch at either end and the eyes (dark brown) are constantly filling with tears that sometimes escape into the lashes. She dabs them away with a tiny folded handkerchief.

I'm usually suspicious of people who claim to have 'nerves' but I believe this woman is genuinely bewildered. I shall never forget the look of despair that came into her eyes when first she heard Meyrick, our Irishman, talking about money and 'the recipe for economic salvation'. But I don't understand what went on in her mind then. To learn more I'll even put up with her scratchy little voice.

The boy Graham is a pale effeminate child with blond hair wet at the front and brushed into a cowlick. His mother seems completely dependent on him. He's never allowed out of her sight. And he seems helpless. He plays at her feet, he eats at her direction, he expresses himself only through her. Yet his eye is lively enough: at times there's a gleam of cunning in it. I believe he knows quite well what's being done to him.

So now we are four.

Au revoir Miss Rose.

March 7. When are these fine days going to end? Today the heat was so fierce I expected to see people walking about with the skin curling off them like bark. But *I* have become a regular sun-baby. My skin is as tough and brown as leather and I no longer have to worry about burning. Some people aren't so lucky. Poor Graham Matthews. Though he hasn't had his shirt off all day his arms and legs are as red as tomatoes. His mother fusses about him and blames herself. Miss Rose too seems upset, and with dinner tonight we had five full courses of solicitude. Graham takes it calmly. He seems as absorbent as blotting paper to this sort of thing.

March 8. Today I played ping pong, certainly for the last time. My reflexes are too slow for games of this kind: the pretentions of my old muscles were quite ruthlessly squashed. I played only because I felt sorry for Graham Matthews. I went on to the veranda

after lunch and found him there with his mother, Miss Rose, and Mrs Travis the artist. The boy was sitting in a wicker chair looking miserable. He was wearing a straw hat pulled very low and his burnt arms and legs were thickly smeared with some sort of white cream. There were dabs of it on his cheeks and nose too and for some reason this annoyed me. The ping pong table was not in use so I called him over and we started a game. It appeared that he'd never played before but we managed to hit the ball back and forth a number of times and I think he enjoyed it. He hopped about quite briskly and gave all sorts of odd yelps. But before long several events conspired to end the game. Mrs Travis stood up to go, (this woman has never liked me since I sunbathed in the middle of a scene she was painting) the ball was mishit and bounced up her skirt where it must have lodged in some fold for it didn't come down, and Graham, following too fast, fell to his knees and seemed to be peering after it. There was a cry, a slap, an undignified wriggle, a tinny-sounding bounce as the ball was freed, a glare, a flounce, and a huffy exit. When it finally occurred to me to look for Graham he was safe in the circle of his mother's arm. The game, I understood, was over.

But—Miss Rose was smiling. It's an ill wind etc. I told myself and went off to my room for a rest.

There was an unpleasant scene at dinner. Meyrick came in drunk and began to belch loudly.

Miss Rose leaned over and said to Mrs Matthews, 'Aren't men pigs.'

Mrs Matthews started to cry and left the room holding a handkerchief to her eyes.

Graham watched her go without a trace of emotion. He went on with his dessert as though nothing had happened, absorbed apparently in the taste of peaches and jelly.

For some reason I found it all rather frightening.

March 9. Morning. This morning I went down to the beach to sunbathe. I have a little valley in the sandhills, a grassy-walled niche with a black-sand floor running into the beach. I lie there sizzling in the heat like a fish in a frying pan. I dozed off with a towel over my head and, in that hot only semi-pleasant state, was disturbed by voices. I recognized them after a while as those of Mrs Matthews and Miss Rose. I lifted the towel but could see nobody. I had heard more than enough of the pointless talk of these women so I felt no guilt: I was within earshot but certainly wasn't an eavesdropper. The boy came into sight on the beach.

He smiled shyly at me in my valley. I watched him for a while then resumed my doze. The voices still came. The heat must have dulled my mind for it wasn't until they were silent and Mrs Matthews began to cry that I caught the sense of what had been said. Then the only thing to do was to lie still and hope I wouldn't be seen.

I remember this much of the conversation:

Miss Rose: I suppose I deserve what I got. I shouldn't complain. I knew what I was doing. But there was more to it than just a trick. It was as much for him as for me, it was a way of getting to love him, really love I mean. But he couldn't understand that. He couldn't go any further than money and an address, the right address, the best man. Everything I said just bounced off him. He didn't know what I was talking about—it was like talking to a child. He just held out the money as though it was something that made even feeling unnecessary.

Mrs Matthews (cutting across Miss Rose): You see, you see, nothing ever lasts when you've made it perfect. You hold it in your hand and it just falls away piece by piece until there's only a sort of skeleton left. Don't you see I held it, John and Graham and me, it was a thing, and then he made it fall apart. And he doesn't even know he's done it. He just sits there talking about money or reading his detective stories.

Miss Rose: He said he wanted me to go to the best place. He didn't want anything to happen to me. Wasn't that nice. And the funny thing is he still wants to marry me. He says, 'I still want to marry you Hilda.' He says it in that noble forgiving way as though getting pregnant was something I did all by myself. Clever girl. But he does want to marry me. Only he isn't going to have a baby arrive too soon. He isn't going to have his friends think he's been trapped. So I have to go through this.

Mrs Matthews: He gives me everything but what I want. I don't want clothes and cars and a house. I could be happy in a mud hut. He laughs at me when I say that. But I could, and so could he have when we started. The money was nothing then. It was living together that mattered and having Graham together and having nothing we didn't share.

Miss Rose: Sometimes I sit down with a piece of paper in front of me and try to write and say I don't want to see him any more. But I can't do it. I don't think I'll ever be able to. He's still got too much that I want. He's still got everything I want—except what I wanted most. And even for that I sometimes feel there's a chance. I feel that whatever it was I was after he hasn't quite

killed it yet. That's a small reason I know, but sometimes it seems bigger than the other one.

Mrs Matthews: Now it's nothing but money, how much he's sold this week and how much he expects to sell next week and whether he ought to have a sale, and he's not even talking to me when he says it, he's seeing something else. He doesn't need me. He doesn't even see me. Every time he looks at me and doesn't see me and starts talking about money he's killing something in me. I'm dying don't you see. But that doesn't worry him as long as I do it the right way, the way that's proper. As long as his friends approve.

Miss Rose: Proper! That's the word Steve uses all the time. Tick tock. It's mechanical as that.

Mrs Matthews: I can't go on any longer. I can't. I just can't be tortured like that.

She began to cry.

I tried to breathe softly and I waited for them to go. The boy was down by the water. He kept looking back as though unable to believe he'd been allowed to stray so far. Because of his burns he wore shoes and socks instead of sandals. His sleeves were rolled down and buttoned at the wrists. He made a dark pathetic little figure against the creaming waves.

Presently the women hurried to where he was standing and the three walked off along the beach.

There's nothing I can do to help them. I can only feel sorry.

Does pity help, secret silent pity?

Evening. I am alone again. They left this afternoon. I think I'll always remember the way it happened, but remember more the sadness I felt, the way this deepened and became strange and frightening when I had to face their empty chairs at dinner. I am still upset by it. I have grown too old to have doors like this opened to me. I am not a selfish person; but surely those who have cared all their lives have earned themselves an easy decline.

I'll think of the events, and those only after a moment.

It was an afternoon of fierce heat. I decided on a shaded walk in the bush and made my destination the little double-drop cascades behind the hotel. The path was dappled with shadows and wound beside a rocky stream choked with watercress. I managed to pick a few leaves of this and their sharp taste made me feel fresh and vigorous. I'd been nervous of the two mile walk but I managed it in fine style: there are so many delightful views of the sunny little stream curving into and out of sight that I had no time to notice any weariness. And when the track finally did grow steep there was an increasing noise of water to draw me on.

The falls are locked in heavy bush and make a satisfying journey's end. In their summer thinness they're pleasant rather than spectacular. The volume of water isn't great but in spite of this there's a fair amount of noise and spray. The lower fall is viewed from a rock platform close to its brink. It appears to drop about twenty-feet, the upper perhaps thirty. Between them lies a long pool, quiet and green and deep, moving only as it channels towards the lower drop.

I sat beside this pool and enjoyed a cigarette. It was very peaceful. I found myself wishing I'd brought a camera.

On the way back I rested at a place where the stream cuts through the path and is crossed by natural stepping stones. I sat on one of these and bathed my feet in the water. Here I was surprised by Miss Rose, Mrs Matthews and Graham, and I delayed them for a moment as I put on my socks and sandals. I apologized, they answered politely, the boy smiled at me, and they went on.

When I got back to the hotel I had a short nap then spent a pleasant hour on the veranda with a novel. Later I leant on the rail and watched the valley drink in the last sunshine of the day. Shadows were stretching out behind trees and moving down the sandhills. The sky was dusty with slanting rays and the sea had an unbroken white sheen. Inland whole tree faces were picked out as the sun moved directly on to them. I smoked my daily pipe and watched the slow changes take place. I was there for perhaps an hour, quietly contented.

At the end of that time I saw the boy Graham come out of the path and sit on the wooden bridge. He was carrying his shoes. Presently he was joined by his mother and Miss Rose and the three came along together. Soon I noticed that Mrs Matthews was walking as though badly overtired, and when she came close I saw she'd been crying again. Her eyes were so brimming with tears they were blurred, and her mouth had a new and much looser shape, Although the boy was beside her she paid no attention to him. It almost seemed she didn't realize he was there.

I came down the steps and asked Miss Rose if there was anything I could do. She answered that there was nothing. Mrs Matthews had had a turn and would be all right after a rest, that was all. The two women went inside. The boy had put his shoes on the bottom step and was standing a little way off smiling at me.

'And how are you Graham?' I asked.

'I'm very well thank you,' he replied.

He kept smiling at me and moving his feet in the dust. His eyes were more lively than ever, and if I judged correctly his whole

mind was on the beach. He seemed on the point of asking *me* if he could go.

But before this happened Miss Rose came on to the veranda.

'Graham,' she said, 'come in and pack your case. We're going to take your mother home.'

The boy didn't do anything for a moment. His face lost colour under the burning. I thought he was going to cry. But then his eyes began to move and work. I could see him making up his mind.

His movement when it came was like a small explosion. Dust puffed under his feet and he was off for the beach as hard as he could run.

For a moment I thought Miss Rose was going to let him go. Then she clattered grimly down the steps and ran after him. She ran very fast. There was no doubt from the beginning that she'd catch the boy.

He reached the sandhills and climbed them about twenty yards ahead of her. Over the top he went and she was closer, the sand spraying from her feet and sparking in the sun.

I stood there waiting for her to lead him back, thinking how competent she was proving and wondering how she could be so sympathetic to the woman yet so blind to the needs of the boy.

Then, as I waited, Mrs Matthews went past me, stumbling between a walk and run. She reached the sandhills, slipped at the bottom, began to crawl. From far off I felt her frenzy but her whole action was so shadowed with shame and privacy, so lost in pain, that I *couldn't* move to help her. She crawled, slipped back, crawled again, like something crushed and blotted out, moving by instinct.

At last she reached the top. The boy was led to her. She flung herself forward, caught him in an embrace Miss Rose had trouble breaking. It was some time before they were still.

They were there for perhaps ten minutes, clear in the sunlight on top of the sandhills. Then they came back. Mrs Matthews was a wretched sight, hair and sand glued to wet cheeks. Her hand held the boy's so that only the bunched and swollen tips of his fingers showed.

Graham didn't look up. He let himself be led.

Later Miss Rose got them into a taxi. I watched the long black car speed up the hill road with light flashing from its windows and dust billowing behind. It rounded the corner and they were gone.

And tonight at dinner the empty chairs made my heart contract as though from a shock. All my life I've cared too much.

What is there we can do?

II

ALICE Matthews was happy. She was happy just to walk in the shade and enjoy the quietness of the bush. Everything was peaceful, the tall trees stately, there wasn't a sharp noise or movement anywhere to jar her delicate contentment. No pain, not even intimations of pain, for the first time on the holiday.

The water has such a clear fine motion. Where have I seen it like that before?

How many streams had run through her life, and why were they always mysterious, even when clear and sunny like this? It must be the coming, the going, the brilliant but only partial presence, the certain running on through unknown worlds. Streams could make you sad and small or full of hope and wonder.

'Miss Rose what a lovely little stream. Graham see, and look, watercress.'

Just to see it so clean and proud and crisp between the rocks was to feel yourself washed free of tiredness and left with a tingling new sensitive body.

The old skin sloughed. Why shouldn't that be?

She let her mind meander with the path and dream soft little questions; her mood made trembling mirages which she smiled to see. Miss Rose walked ahead with her own thoughts, Graham ahead enjoying himself.

'Cutty grass mummy.'

'Don't touch it dear. Just walk round it carefully.'

But the sharp grass was a reminder: a tiny friendly busy child, red-ribboned pigtails swinging as she played—and games that end with bleeding fingers. Always it was the same.

Imagination or memory? She couldn't tell. But she felt that the mind didn't lie with these pictures: they held all sorts of reality, truths she hadn't the strength to find in any other way.

'Mind your legs dear.'

She walked behind Graham and the swords curved hungrily towards him.

I can't understand—he's so thin. And he's got so much to go through yet, so much to endure.

Growing up was painful. So many doors knocked hopefully at, so few opened. Graham had all that ahead of him, and only her between him and the whole demanding dead mass of duties men had created.

'Wait dear, wait for me.'

She walked close to him through the quiet bush and watched the

shadows and sunlight flicker at his feet.

As long as I can keep him, just as long as that. I WILL be able to make it last.

Around the corner, now with shadows moving dimly, not yet settled into shapes, behind her transparent mood.

Miss Rose said, 'There's that old fool Lambourne.'

He was sitting on a rock and surely there was no need for him to keep them waiting as he dried his feet with a handkerchief. He squatted like a gargoyle, and with the rough eyes of men he asked the obvious question. What are these women doing way out here?

He went by slowly, apologizing.

Over the stepping-stones, Miss Rose, Graham, herself, and on up the path. It was still easy but the bush was thicker and the tree trunks were lost in underbrush.

There must at one time have been a fight for the good positions, a struggle for light and air.

A place in the sun—who said that?

A man, certainly a man.

John's place in the sun—his own business and a tidy little bank account and a right in men's eyes to acknowledge his success and a duty to it to drink his whisky without a blink like a person to whom double-headers were a matter of course.

And in the struggle to this he must have known he was stripping their self, their marriage, to the bare bones. What was it now? John Matthews, Quality Clothing, Mrs Matthews, Charming Wife. The invitation to the businessmen's dinner was automatic of course.

'What is it Mrs Matthews? Would you like to turn back?'

'No, no, I'm all right. But perhaps if we could go a little slower. The path is getting steep.'

The times of his pride in her were gone forever. Now he was only afraid she'd say something to embarrass him. How often his eyes had told her she must be more careful and held her so she was scared even to breathe.

Slowly, slowly as they climbed higher and she remembered all she had lost, her mind became a terrible void and her thoughts came thinly through in a tiny cramped whisper. The only thing they told her was that she still had Graham. She still had Graham.

'Listen to the water mummy.'

'Yes dear, yes, I can hear.'

I still have Graham.

At last they were at the falls and she sat down on a rock. Graham was trying to pull his hand away. She hadn't realized she'd taken it.

'Look at the water dear. What a long way to drop.'

But the boy wanted to run about.

Some day he'll want to go away from me. But he'll always come back. He'll never be as cruel to me as John was.

Miss Rose said, 'I think it's a miserable little waterfall. Not worth walking all this way for. I think I'll go up and have a look from the top one.'

Graham's hand so tight.

'No dear, you stay here with mother.'

'Hullo, does the boy want to come?'

'Please mummy.'

'No dear, you don't want to leave me here all alone do you?'

'Please, please.'

'Oh let the boy come. It'll do him good.'

Miss Rose was impatient. She knew she'd have to let Graham go.

How excited he is. He doesn't even thank me.

She watched until they disappeared into the bush. And then she remembered that that was how John had behaved; gone blindly off into his own world, where she could not join him, where she couldn't even breathe.

No, it mustn't happen with Graham.

'Graham.'

The noise of the waterfalls drowned her voice.

I still have Graham.

'Graham.'

But of course they couldn't hear. She was being silly.

She must sit still and be calm and wait.

Graham and Miss Rose came out beside the top fall. They waved to her and she waved back. She must be calm.

What was Graham trying to say, so happy? But he was too close to the edge.

'Miss Rose get him back.' She signalled.

He went back a little and stood looking round.

He was still too close to the edge. Why didn't Miss Rose get him back.

'Miss Rose.'

They can't hear. Nobody can hear.

She must not torture herself like this. She must sit still and try to be sensible. She must *not* look up.

If ever I should lose him . . . .

A thought she had forbidden herself.

She looked up to the top fall.

He was still in the same position, the same attitude, but solemn now.

Like John that day.

And suddenly he had reminded her of something. The day, the fine drizzle, the traffic, the shop, John over the road staring at his first shop, arms folded, chest hollowed, bent with concentration, staring away from her. Taking his first step away.

Graham was standing like that.

He began to fade and dissolve behind tears.

'Graham.'

I still have Graham. I have.

'Graham.'

But she couldn't see him any more.

He was gone, and she felt herself drawn to the rushing channel till he was gone even from her mind; and in a great aching stream her life swelled from her wide crying mouth and dropped away with the water, and her heart was numb and empty.

Later she stood by the fall, relaxed, resting, unable to do anything but rest. Heavy warm tears ran down her face. When she thought of herself she thought as of another person. She found it sad that this person could have her boy no more.

How sad, how sad, as she rested.

III

THE boy moved ahead of her, thin legs ploughing manfully through the underbrush. She followed slowly and as she watched him she couldn't help wondering why people with fancy ideas on bringing up children always produced the weedy specimens. She wouldn't have been surprised to learn that Graham had been fed from birth on linseed and nuts—with perhaps a few raisins thrown in to thicken his blood, and a slice of beetroot to colour it. But the boy had strength of a sort, a kind of inborn selfishness that would see him through. He was, she fancied, a little like Steve in that. Look at him now rushing on up there. Let the poor woman trail along behind. A blind spot developing, a blind spot in embryo, potentially just as convenient, just as comfortable, as Steve's.

She smiled, thinking, sour grapes, sour grapes, well you've earned your right to grouch.

Surely a right to do more than grouch.

'Hilda?'

The soft-stroking hand had rested a moment light along her side,

and now, moving again, grew uncertain like the voice, hesitating as the fingers moved over her ribs towards the armpit, over the silk of her blouse and the ripple of bones, apologetic, loving, soft and light.

Yes, she answered, yes, finding him new and promising, finding him lost and asking and tender.

'Hilda?'

His face vague and troubled against the sky, eyes turned down along her body, and the moon making everything simple and turning her to longing.

Yes, she answered.

'Will you do something for me—Hilda?'

The hand very nervous plucking the silk at her side.

Yes. Her arm closed softly over it. Yes.

'Hilda—will you—I don't know how to ask, but—will you, before we go out to meet my mother—will you—please—take the nicotine off your fingers?'

She uttered again the half-sobbing cry of disbelief and up ahead the boy turned round and looked enquiringly at her. She shook her head, caught him, pushed him on and followed close, breathing quickly, feeling that if she concentrated it would hurt less, she could forget more easily.

'Look Graham, see the waterfall through the trees. We're level with the top of it now.'

She told herself she was interested in the waterfall, in the view she would see, in the boy and his mother, in everything but Steve and what had happened. That was gone, that had been torn out of her and flushed matter-of-factly down a drain. She was here not to remember but to complete the cure, to keep on forgetting, until she could pluck out, dry and withered, the dream she had built in those few weeks: Steve and home and baby and at last quietness and love. There was no dream to be lived, just a dull and proper marriage with sex on Wednesdays and Saturdays and a planned and factual baby after time had done her little job of making things respectable.

She stumbled and as she saved herself her fingers ran through a dry crackly mat of fern hair to a layer of damp mould underneath. She pushed herself upright and took a folded handkerchief from the front pocket of her shorts and wiped her fingers.

The white lace at the corners was silky to touch. A faint scent of Black Rose drifted up.

Oh there *had* been something real, surely there had been something real in her dream.

The boys were at their best, careless, gay, insinuating, and the girls laughed shrilly and held out their glasses to the sparkling jugs, and their feet moved and tapped and shuffled to the beat of the tea-chest bass and their blood rose with the high frenzy of the steel guitar that dominated the hot lawns, stabbing out its fine curving scream to every ear, cutting under the umbrellas, along the benches, through the trellis, over the flowers, round the trees, into the shaded bar where it ran like some clear underwater cry from the fish floating in scarlet yellow blue and green, cool on the walls above the laughter and the sunburned thirsty faces.

Waiwera and a new year born. Everywhere youth and excitement, eyes that might soon be promising, memories that said yes.

But in a corner, behind Steve and his friends, behind a forest of brown long legs, she talked with a girl who, last Christmas, had been shrill and rowdy, with hot restless eyes, but now was married and had come just for the day with her husband, and was quiet, somehow lifted away into a slower world.

She said, 'Hilda, I've never been so happy as since I've been married. And I wasn't sure I wanted to be married, that's the funny thing.'

Soon the girl left with her husband, threading through the crowd, smiling back only once, her hand resting loose in his.

Watching, Hilda knew that married people were different, they were released, they did not have to try or act, they were simplified, bared, known, free. They were cooled and human and tender. And she knew that her hand had never been taken with love, without thought, without desire, and could never be taken like that until she too had been freed and could be simple and easy.

She did not think. She made no decision. She looked at Steve, she sat behind him, knowing it must happen, that until it happened she could never be happy.

That night she whispered, 'Steve, it's safe, it'll be all right, I promise. Stevie.'

She neither believed nor disbelieved this. It was no longer a thing to think about. All belief in her was bent towards the new life waiting to flower quietly, the life that was cool and ordinary and real.

In the beergarden one day, in an Orewa bach one night, it started. Six weeks later Steve took out his wallet, and it ended.

She crumpled the handkerchief. She called at the boy to go faster. They broke through fern down a hill and came out beside the fall. The boy was immediately too close to the edge. She said,

'Come back. Do you want your mother to have heart failure?'

Mrs Matthews was signalling frantically; the boy edged back. Now he was calmer but his eyes still shone. He stood with arms folded looking down the valley as though it were a piece of land he was thinking of breaking in. She looked away too, over the lower fall, the green pit behind it, the bush and hills, the bright fan of sea, and she turned as though seeing were all she had to do.

'Come on. Let's go up this way.'

She felt she must keep moving.

They went a short way on rocks that sank gradually to the level of the water. She slipped off her sandals, placed the handkerchief in one of them, and waded in. Her toes curled and gripped the pebbles: at once she was fresher and happier. The ripples slipping on to the dry part of her legs sent pleasant shivers over her body. She reached the middle of the pool where the water came almost to her shorts. She trailed her fingertips, waiting for Graham. He came behind, trousers rolled up, legs cutting away at odd angles as the ripples moved. She watched him grow adventurous; he waded the length of the pool. tipping rocks and poking into corners. Then she joined him in a lobster hunt, letting him play the leader, laughing at his excitement. And when at last she came back to the rocks to sit down she was happy; she had, for a blank frightening moment, no idea of why she was here for this rest or how anything had come about. She smiled when she remembered; and Steve and his friends arranged themselves in her mind in a pattern, an order they had once held.

She remembered,—it was the time she had photographed them at Christmas, standing all in a row. The chromium-plated men—Steve brown and handsome, with shining confident smile, Rex Webb tall and thick-legged, a wink and a grin under the fishin' hat with the tattered feather, Dick Beatty with crewcut, tan, shoulders, Tom Connor in the tennis hat and the varsity blazer, with a whisper about him of somebody's prize for accountancy. She clicked the camera, saw them break from their row in front of the glittering grill of the car that belonged to a father. They came to the girls, gay and casual, and somehow exactly right. right with the ease and grace that always puzzled her and made her nervous.

But now she was not convinced, she held herself as hard as rock and their thin superiority sped past like water and left her unchanged. She thought, without faces you'd never tell them apart. Even if you slept with them. A girl might just as well buy herself a packet of candles.

She laughed, and her mind played about them, Steve and Rex, Dick and Tom; she decided 'right and proper' was the phrase that summed up all four.

Right and proper. The little idea that ran them, exploding automatically, again and again, behind the fast gay flashing streamlined show of their lives.

And in the light of their idea she saw them smiling and perfect, but terribly small and mean, dry and flat as paper. Behind them, like a thought, the child was playing in the water. And another, a dream child, a child who had never been allowed to live—there had been no doors in the tight little wall of the idea, no way for him to get in.

She called, 'Come here Graham. We'd better go.'

He pretended not to hear and went on with his game.

She didn't call again. She was realizing that she had taken part in it too—it had been her act as much as Steve's, she had accepted the plan. But *not* for his reason. Only because, her anger gone, she had felt sorry, seeing him vulnerable. And so she had taken money, and the address, and agreed that when the rest, or holiday as he called it, was over they would get engaged. In that way, but in that way only, she had become part of it. She did not *need* to feel guilty.

She called Graham again and he sat on the rocks beside her. She tried to touch his hair but he pulled away.

For a moment she thought she was going to cry, and she realized there was no point in fighting against it. The boy must be used to tears in women. But she stopped herself and jerked on her sandals and sat staring at the water.

'What's your father like Graham?'

He shrugged and didn't answer.

'Is he nice and brown and good-looking?'

But the answer didn't matter. Bald, glasses, a bit fat. It didn't matter. He was Steve all the same. Steve with an older face and a little pot. The man she was going to marry. One of the candles, one of the chromium-plated men. Now that she saw him like that it was hard to feel he'd been cruel, hard to care about anything he'd done. Even refusing to marry him was no longer worth the effort.

She decided she was luckier than Mrs Matthews. She had got her crying over. She wouldn't be doing it in ten or fifteen years. She has had her little operation early.

She reached over and touched Graham's hair. He shied away. No, she wouldn't be writing any letter. She would take what she

could get—the chromium-plate, the car and house and clothes, the right and proper babies. There was nothing else. Certainly not the dream. And certainly nothing real. She hadn't the strength to fight for anything real.

She stood up.

Graham said, 'Your hankie Miss Rose.'

The perfume and lace.

She felt it slipping from her hand, made no effort to close the fingers. Not the strength to fight for anything real, but the strength now at least to let that go.

It bobbed away dry and high on the water.

Graham said, 'I'll get it Miss Rose.'

She caught his arm.

'No. It doesn't matter. I don't want it any more.'

The frilly thing bucked and spun and she followed down slowly, until it was gone, until that too was flushed away, matter-of-factly.

As it disappeared into the white shreds of water the boy gave and Indian war-whoop.

IV

GRAHAM walked quietly behind them, hardly believing it had happened. His mother hadn't turned to look at him once, she didn't seem to know he was there. He was so used to doing everything exactly as she told him and with her watching that now he felt whatever he did was being done for the first time.

Ever since he had gone into the bush with Miss Rose he'd been doing things for the first time. He'd waded in a creek for the first time, and coming down he'd swung on a creeper, and now he was dusty right up to the ankles and for the first time in his life he was walking in bare feet carrying his shoes with a sock stuffed down into the toe of each one.

At first he'd been nervous. He'd come down to have his shoes put on and his hand taken. But she'd been crying. She hadn't taken any notice of him. She hadn't looked at him, and now he wasn't nervous any more. He was enjoying himself.

Everything was new and bright; but most of all he liked the unpleasant smell from his shoes when he held them close to his nose, and the gritty feeling between his toes where the dust was damp. They were things his mother would have got rid of if she'd been interested any more.

He was walking behind her and she was part of all that was

new. He'd never seen her from behind for so long. He'd never noticed the knobbles on the back of her neck or the way her shoulder bones stuck out—the place the angel wings would sprout —or the way her bottom was hollow at the sides under her dress, like sucked-in cheeks. He felt guilty noticing this and almost expected his mother to turn and say, Graham you shouldn't think about things like that it isn't nice now you say after me the world is full of God's beautiful things and I'll only see the beautiful things. For a minute it seemed she *was* speaking and he felt himself go cold, as if he'd stepped into a patch of shadow.

The women came to the stream. They crossed and Graham jumped from stone to stone behind them. He sat down where Mr Lambourne had been and let the water run over his feet. Then he dried them with his handkerchief—a funny idea that and it made the handkerchief dirty. He studied the marks, smeary or star-shaped on the white, and he squeezed and patted the handkerchief till it made a square damp brick that lay as heavy as lead on his hand. When he'd finished he looked up, and he found that his mother and Miss Rose had gone.

He was alone . . . .

He was sitting here all by himself.

He half rose and a frightened call started in his throat—but it didn't come out properly: he stopped it so that it went only a little way. He sat down again.

He was alone.

He was here in the bush on a big warm rock like a boat in the middle of the creek. The creek ran towards him and away and so did the path. They were both empty and mysterious. The trees stood still. Everything was still.

The only sound came from the water.

And the only people close were out of sight and going further away every minute.

He was getting more and more alone.

The call he'd begun made a grinding sound as it died in his chest. He was thrilled and fearless in the greatest excitement he'd ever known. He sat and enjoyed moment after moment of it. The path and the creek, the sun, the trees, the rocks, even the sky, all came together at this spot. He was at the place where everything met. He could stay forever. He'd been forgotten.

But soon the memory of home and father and mother pushed sharply in and he grew more sensible. He would have to go home at the end of the holiday of course, but before then he had more than a week to be by himself—if his mother stayed this way. He

hoped she would, but found it hard to imagine. And he realized he'd better hurry or Miss Rose would come back and that night start his mother off.

As he ran he grew anxious. She might be remembering already. The thought of going round with her and being held by the hand for the rest of the holiday was more than he could bear. He'd rather go home than have that happen. At least then he'd get the days to himself at school and his father would be annoyed if his mother cuddled him too much.

He could hear his father's voice. 'Alice don't coddle the boy.'

A funny way he said cuddle. But his father was a funny person in lots of ways. He sometimes smoked cigars but he didn't take the labels off. He wore things on his arms called armbands made of gold or silver. He always started books in the middle but if he liked one he'd go back to the beginning and sit up all night finishing it. Sometimes he drank too much whisky at the club. When Graham asked where his father was his mother would say, 'He's drinking whisky at the club'. She'd send him to bed early and sit talking to him until his father came in. Then she would go out and he'd hear them arguing in the kitchen. There'd been one night when his father had burst into the bedroom and jerked him up in bed and shouted, 'Do I look so bad to you?' He was black against the light from the door and there was a sweet sick smell on his breath. Graham whimpered and pulled his head away, and his father threw him back on the pillow and stamped out swearing. Later he'd heard him shout, 'Go to bed woman. I'm sick of the sound of your voice.' When he was less frightened he was able to admire his father for talking like that.

The next day his mother explained to him that drinking was one of the things you had to forgive when you loved somebody. She also explained why it was wrong, and together they made a promise they'd never touch anything that would make them drunk. They had dozens of little promises like this about all sorts of things. One of them was they'd pretend not to hear when his father swore. Another was they'd pretend his father loved him.

His father didn't love him (his mother explained it) but there were times when he tried to be interested. Graham dreaded these. After being ignored for weeks he'd be taken by the shoulders and pulled close.

'Now son, I want to hear what you've been doing.'

Then he'd be tongue-tied or he'd stammer and he wouldn't look higher than the tiepin. Finally his father would push him away

and turn back to his book saying, 'He's not very bright, our boy, is he Alice?'

Sometimes Graham had to hide behind his mother to escape a strapping.

He'd been strapped only once. His father had pushed his mother away and hit him three or four cuts about the legs and shoved him outside and slammed the door.

He'd cried on the lawn and his mother came out and put her arm round him and they sat there for a long time. She told him how brave he would have to be—but he wished she'd go away and leave him alone.

The moon came up quickly, orange and frightening, and she made him watch it and told him how beautiful everything was if you could only see from a pure heart. He hated her arm about him more than his father's blows.

Now as he ran along the path he wanted to be alone just as badly as he'd wanted it that night, and his mother's presence was almost as real. He caught the women and walked nervously behind them. He couldn't see his mother very well. She was in front of Miss Rose. The cutty grass sawed at her dress.

When after a long while she hadn't looked round Graham's idea that he was forgotten returned and his excitement grew again easily. He was going to be alone for a whole week. He could go wherever he liked, at any old time.

He wanted to begin at once. He wanted to shout and run. His heart thumping with excitement he passed her, and he ran on, dragging his feet toes down in the dust.

He came on to the road, ran to the bridge, sat down with the backs of his legs resting on the warm wood. Already he was making plans.

First, before tea, he'd go round the rocks to the blowhole. Miss Rose had told him about it and he saw a tall geyser that shot up to the top of the cliffs and was sucked back into the rocks with a hideous gobble. He would go there first. Then he would see what was round the black cliffs at the top of the beach and maybe find caves.

His mother and Miss Rose went past and he followed, still planning.

He'd go up to the nikau grove three miles into the bush. One day he'd visit the waterfalls again and catch lobsters and explore right up the creek. And then there'd be different things, another game of ping pong with Mr Lambourne, a hired canoe on the lagoon, a ride on a surfboard. But first—the blowhole.

He walked on happily. Yes, he had a whole week to go wherever he liked.

Miss Rose took his mother into the hotel and he stopped on the steps.

Now was the time to go.

But he found he couldn't move. A whole crowd of ideas came into his mind as soon as he took the first step. His mother would know, she'd follow him. Miss Rose would stop him. Mr Lambourne would stop him. He might get lost.

He knew he was being silly, he was losing his chance. But he couldn't move.

Mr Lambourne said, 'And how are you Graham?'

'I'm very well thank you,' he replied in the polite way his mother had taught him. Mr Lambourne was smiling.

Perhaps if he asked Mr Lambourne since he had to ask a grown up.

Mr Lambourne would say yes.

He was getting ready to begin when Miss Rose came out and said, 'Graham, come in and pack your case. We're going to take your mother home.'

He thought nothing. He was stunned as though somebody had knocked him hard against a wall.

Then things started rushing out, rushing away, so fast he didn't know what they were. Things he had been thinking,

Get away, he felt. Get away. The blowhole.

He started to run. He heard Miss Rose clatter down the steps and he knew he was going to be caught. He kept running. There was a place in the sandhills where he could hide.

He went over the top, running hard, and tumbled down into Mr Lambourne's gully. He pressed himself against the end of it, panting, gripping handfuls of grass, fingers curled in the sandy roots. He knew he was going to be caught, but he had to keep trying. He might keep going long enough to see the blowhole.

Miss Rose's head came up like a moon. Her shoulders followed. She was walking, looking round, but not towards him. He lay very still and she went out of sight.

Then he heard his mother's voice crying his name.

She was coming too.

Wildly he ran from the gully and set off along the beach. Head down he went past Miss Rose, then lifted his eyes to the blowhole cliffs.

They were pale and very far off, floating away in a mist of sunshine.

V

A LETTER from John Matthews to Walter Spence.
Dear Wally,

Just a note to say goodbye. I'm sorry there's no chance of your getting out this way before you leave but I know how it is—last minute business and all that. Still I daresay that sometime during the next five years or so we'll find you dropping in out of the blue. They won't be able to keep you cooped up in the South Island for too long I guess.

There's something else I should say. I'm sorry for being so absent minded when you called in at the shop this afternoon. Actually I was worried about Alice. You know she hasn't been very well for some time, but just lately she seems to have got a lot worse. These middle-aged women with nerves aren't the joke some people think they are.

I told you a bit about it I remember—don't know what's got into me telling you all over again.

What a bloody awful note this is. Look Wally, what I want to say is Good Luck. If anyone deserves it you do. Keep us posted and call in any time you're back this way. You know you're always welcome—

God Wally this is no good. I've got to have somebody to talk to. I don't know what I'm doing.

What a joke this is. I just screwed this letter up and then I smoothed it out again. But I'm not going to send it. You don't have to worry. I just want to get some things clear. I think I know what's happened and I think I know what to do, but I'm not sure. If I can talk to you even like this I might be able to see things clearly.

I want to get the simple facts. I know how to deal with facts.

They went for a holiday you see. The doctor said it might help. But last night they came home over a week early and they had a girl called Hilda Rose with them.

I didn't understand what had happened and I still don't. Alice wouldn't speak to me or even look at me and I couldn't get any sense out of Graham. The Rose girl said my wife had been taken ill and that was all she seemed to know. She said she was going to stay and nurse her. She's a strange sort of person. She doesn't want to be paid.

I've been blind Wally. I've been a stranger in my own home. I've got to learn. I didn't know certain things were being chal-

lenged. *That's* a fact too, something I've got to look at. But I don't know why I'm putting it down yet. It doesn't come yet. I've got to see things clearly.

This morning Alice called Graham into her room as soon as she was awake. She always *sleeps* well so how can she be so bad? The doctor came at nine o'clock. Graham stayed in there with them which annoyed me for a minute. But I didn't do anything about it. I didn't want to start an argument. When the doctor came out I took him into the lounge. I told him I wanted to know once and for all what was going on.

Wally what do we pay these people for? They don't know any more than we do. They've just been taught a lot of fancy words that's all. He said something about an emotional collapse. She wouldn't tell him what happened out there at the beach so he had to guess. Emotional collapse. Emotional bullshit I say. Then he tried a few of his medical school tricks. You know the ones. Rest and quiet, patience and consideration. The young bastard was treating me as though I was some three and sixpenny runny nose. I told him what I thought of his emotional collapse idea. I told him if he couldn't do any better than that I'd send for someone who could.

Then he told me what Alice *had* said. It was all about me. I was money-mad, whisky-drinking, irritable, insensitive, I neglected her, I bullied Graham, I lived for the shop, I put my friends before her, I was sarcastic, I didn't think, I didn't even try to be interested in the things she was, the only way I tried to make her happy was by giving her things, I didn't understand her, etc. etc. It was all so familiar. And yet Wally it was new. Somebody else's voice saying it made it all new. It meant something Wally.

I asked him how he would feel if he had a shop to run with competition growing and money tight. Wouldn't he be irritable, wouldn't he drink too much now and then. These people don't understand. They think money grows on trees. They think you can close the door on a place like mine and go home and forget all about it. They don't know how much of it lives with you. You know Wally, you can understand what I mean. And you know how I feel. I've been taken for granted and it's beginning to hurt.

I got into a temper. I gave him my side of the story. Everybody in the house must have heard but I didn't care. I told him Alice wanted a pet not a husband, someone to come running whenever she whistled, someone whose only job in life was to please her. It had been all right when we were first married. And I played the game longer than most men do. But it ended. I had to get on to

something serious and she'd never been able to accept the fact. It scares me what I said. I said she tried to eat me alive. But that's true. That's what she tried.

Wally I'm still writing this to you. And you're listening to me, and you don't know it but you're helping me. I was upset when I finished writing just now. But I've had a drink and I feel steadier. It's late, after ten. Everybody's asleep. It's very quiet and I can see all this clearly. It helps in black and white like this. Now I'll say it again. She tried to eat me alive. I had to do what I did.

I got an answer from the doctor when I said that to him. He said he understood what I meant because he could see her doing the same thing with Grham. He said it was bad for the boy to be with her so much of the time. He'd tried to make her see that, but hadn't had a chance. And he said we'd have to work together to make the two of them less dependent on each other. The way he talked annoyed me but he was right. He told me exactly what I knew, what I've been putting aside and trying to forget for years.

I haven't really behaved like a father to Graham. At times I try to be interested but the effort's always too much for me. He speaks *her* language, he feels with *her* feelings. He still seems walled up inside her. I get disgusted and I give up.

It's my fault. I left him to her. *I've* made him like this as much as she has.

The doctor left and I went on thinking just the way I've written now. I didn't know how I was going to do it but I made up my mind to get him away from her. After all he's mine. He's my son. You understand that Wally. It isn't silly. I love him. I hate to sound like this but it's the only way to say it. I've got to say it. I love him.

I called the Rose girl from the kitchen and asked her to send Graham to me. I didn't want to go into the room. But it seems she'd heard the doctor and she had some advice of her own. It wouldn't be fair to take Graham away yet she said. There could be no harm in letting him stay in the bedroom at least for the rest of the morning. I took no notice of her. She was bound to see things from a woman's point of view. I told her this and she lost her temper and said if I wanted Graham I could go and get him for myself. She went back to the kitchen.

I felt like telling her to get out of my house. She's been wandering round as though she owns the place. And although I don't know what it means she's been spying on me. She's watching me. She's watching me all the time. I don't mean she's peeping round

corners or hiding under the bed. I've just got a feeling that everything I do while she's round counts—it counts either for me or against me. She's trying to work me out, and not just as a game. I can't understand. I've never understood women well. But her interfering this time put me in the mood to get something done.

I went into the bedroom. Alice didn't look at me. Usually after an argument with her I find myself remembering things that happened in the early years of our married life, and even though I've never shown it I always feel sorry. I often remember walking home from a dance with her and we got caught in a thunder storm and soaked to the skin and all we could do was laugh and laugh. I can remember that clearly now. I can even hear her laughing and see the hair breaking down over her face and the water streaming through it and running over her cheeks and round her mouth. I remember how warm my arm was round her and hers round me.

Wally it's hard to write down a thing like that. I get ashamed as though I were doing something wrong. But I made myself write it because I know I should have told her sometime that I remembered. I can never tell her now. It's years too late.

When I went in I didn't remember. I took Graham out of the house and drove down to the shop. Alice came on to the porch and called him as we left.

I don't know why all this had to happen on my stocktaking weekend. I should be working on that now. You know the system I use. You taught it to me. Double check. You know Wally I often think I've got along so well because I had the sense to ask your advice and take it. You were the first traveller I met. If you hadn't told me what to do I'd never have got so far. This double check system, it takes time, but when I've finished I know to a penny the value of what I've got in.

I gave Graham the job of calling prices to me. He was slow Wally. He's not very bright. In the end I lost my temper and told him to go home to his mother. At lunch time he was back in her room.

I couldn't concentrate in the afternoon when I got down to the shop. I kept making mistakes. And then Wally, just like that, everything went dead. Nothing like it has ever happened to me before. I've never been so frightened as I was then. I was sitting there thinking about Alice and Graham and trying to think about work, and everything went dead. I know how it happened now. The shop was shut and the doors were covered and the light was weak. The place suddenly looked like a tomb. One of those places

you see in the pictures. But that's not all. How can I explain it?

Dead *is* the only word.

I sat there for a long time. It was the worst time I've ever spent alone with myself. I couldn't seem to work out why I had a pencil in my hand. What the figures meant. What the row of coats was all about. Nothing made sense.

But after a while I worked back and found what had happened. Sometimes before this in the middle of hard work I've found I'm being asked questions. What does it all mean, where is it leading, why are you working so hard? Sometimes it comes and goes as quickly as that and I don't have to answer, but other times it's strong and I've got to stop everything and face it—*find* an answer. It must happen to everybody. Everybody's got to know why he's doing what he's doing.

I try to be honest. I work hard because I like it. But it's not enough to say that. I've got to go further. I've got to say I work for somebody, for my wife and son, for Alice and Graham. That's always been enough. It's sensible. A man works hard because he enjoys it, he builds up something because he likes to see it grow. But he can't stop there. He's got to feel he's working for somebody else.

So that's what happened to me. I couldn't feel I was working for anybody. Alice wasn't interested. She wanted nothing to do with me. And Graham would be like her. He was like her already. That's why everything was dead. I had a row of figures that for some reason I was supposed to add up, and a lot of sports coats and a lot of shelves full of clothes. Nothing else.

I thought Wally. I thought, and there was only one answer—and that answer was Graham.

It's nearly midnight. I keep drinking this damn whisky and I know it's because I'm scared. I don't want things clear any more. They're not simple enough. Alice and Graham are asleep, but what happens when they wake up in the morning? I've been walking around and the quietness scares me. The sound of the pen scares me. It's all there is. No. I can hear the clock.

I've been outside sitting on the steps. I had to get out of the house. But I've got to face these things and realize it isn't going to be easy. I mightn't win in the end.

But I've got to win. I've got to have Graham.

Wally when you come in with young Rex Webb everything moved another step forward. It was young Webb that did it, the

way he walked up and shook hands and looked me straight in the eye. Graham can never be like that. He can never be much good at all.

I couldn't help thinking Wally. You know what can happen to boys like Graham when their mothers have coddled them like that. I can't write the word. I can't write it about my own son.

I've tried to sleep but it's no use. It's after two o'clock. I don't know why I keep on thinking—because I know I've done the right thing.

It was after tea Wally. She called him into her bedroom and I wouldn't let him go. But she kept on calling and in the end he couldn't stand it any more. He disobeyed me Wally. I warned him but he tried to go. So I took him outside and gave him a whipping. He cried too much. I never cried like that when I was a boy.

When Alice came out he ran away and went over the back fence into the reserve. Alice was crying when she came but after a while she stopped and just stood there. She didn't make any noise at all and the girl Rose got her inside and put her to bed. And then *she* came back. I can't remember the things she said. They didn't make sense. In the end she said she was sorrier for me than for them and I told her to go away. I didn't want to listen.

Why should she be sorry for me?

The girl didn't go Wally. She's in there now sleeping with Alice. In some ways she scares me. When I went inside she was writing a letter. She was using the pen as though it was a knife slicing somebody up. I'm sorry she doesn't like me. I can't understand why she doesn't. She's the sort of person I usually get on well with. But I'm glad there's a woman here to help. If she can look after Alice I can look after Graham.

I'm going to change him. I'm going to make him all right.

When I went down to the reserve to find him he was glad to see me. He was scared. Coming home he tried to hold my hand, but I wouldn't let him.

I'm going to make him like young Webb.

I've drunk a lot of whisky tonight but I'm not drunk. It's helped to keep me steady so I've been able to see all this and find out what to do. I know what to do now.

Tonight I sleep on the sunporch. There's not much of the night left. I've just looked in to see Alice. She's asleep. She manages to sleep so she can't be so bad.

Graham's asleep too. I haven't been into his bedroom for a long

time. He's got all his model aeroplanes strung up to the ceiling like bloody ornaments. That sort of thing's going to stop. Tomorrow no matter what happens we'll go out and fly the damn things.

He looks serious. His face is quite strong.

W. J. GARDNER

Grass Roots and Dredge Tailings

Reflections on Local History

THE fact that *Landfall* should make room for an article on local history is far more important than anything I shall write in this survey of it. Local history may not have arrived, but it is on the way. This is largely the result of the labours of the Otago Centennial Historical Committee, whose district histories naturally form the basis of any discussion in the field.[1]

Much has been achieved, but there is some way to go. It is not yet fully accepted that local history is an autonomous and necessary branch of historical studies. Its advocate is still something of a pioneer, and he has to do preliminary work, of a kind familiar in New Zealand, as difficult as pioneering. Often he is trying to put down pasture on an old badly-farmed block, where blackened stumps (recorded legends) and tangles of gorse and broom (popular misconceptions and learned suspicions) have to be patiently and laboriously cleared away. Moreover, the boundaries of the block itself are in dispute, and there is no firm agreement as to what it should produce. The local reader wants annals, the general reader

[1] Mr A. C. Cameron, Dr A. H. McLintock, Professor J. Rutherford, and Mr R. C. Lamb have all kindly provided me with information, but the opinions expressed here are my own.

wants a story, while the New Zealand historian wants both illustration and background. If all these are treated as legitimate claims, in addition to an autonomous approach, it is clear that the definition of the purpose, scope and method of local history is a difficult task. Some will still ask, is it worth the trouble? To them it is story and annals and can never be history. Indeed it loses its charm if it tries to become history. It is sub-literary and sub-academic. *Humani nil a me alienum puto* is the motto of historians, but they all make their own private reservations and local history often heads the list. 'It is,' writes an English authority, 'the Cinderella among historical studies.'[2] The metaphor is just (with its promise of a happy ending) but hackneyed. I shall try my hand at another. Local history is the recorder among the instruments of Clio. It is *par excellence* the instrument for amateurs, family groups, training colleges, schools and the W.E.A. The recorder's notes are not resonant and the audience soon tires of the breathy tones that are the best most amateurs achieve. Finally, a good recorder player is wasting his time; he should graduate to an orchestral instrument.

We must face the fact that there are still problems of communication in the advancement of local history. At one end of the scale the social historian either does not ask enough of it, or is looking for the wrong things from it. He intones as his creed that passage from Carlyle about Boswell and the Mitre Tavern, and hankers after the 'literary' source. He will scarcely be content with anything less than Lady Barker (a misleading witness) and Mrs Godley (a more reliable one). The Railway Hotel does not stand in Fleet Street, and Boswell's spirit would have dried up at its doors, but it is part of our social history. The social historian must take it as he finds it and not expect to meet Boswell in the bar.

On the other hand, the people he does meet there will know a good deal of local history, for though it may not be a 'writer's' subject in New Zealand, it is eminently a 'reader's' one. During the ten years, 1946 to 1955, no less than 61 local histories (apart from booklets) were published, and though their quality varies they have as a *genre* sold very well. The Otago district histories have an impressive record. In all 22,510 copies have been printed, only 1,140 remaining unsold. A theory of the popularity of local history may run as follows. Its appeal in the district concerned needs no explanation, but then no more than half, often less, of the copies are sold there. It is the interest of city people that is at first glance

[2] H. P. R. Finberg, *The Local Historian and his Theme* (University College of Leicester Press, 1952).

remarkable. In our changing, comparatively rootless suburbs, they instinctively look back to the countryside for roots that may have in fact been severed two generations ago. The dull security and unfriendly isolation of life in the suburbs is balanced by a 'return' in imagination to the high country and the goldfields. There, in the old days, so runs the myth, every man *counted*, every man was 'fit to fight or run for a Kingdom'. Yet our decades of wool and gold were too short to give rise to a satisfying literature, hence the surprising number of retired station hands and farmers in this country who have subscribed to the Sydney *Bulletin* all their lives, though the *Bulletin* itself now speaks for the suburbs rather than the outback. For a great number of New Zealanders with a real or fancied nostalgia for the hey-day of the runs, the local history takes the place of the *Bulletin* and Henry Lawson. The myths of New Zealand history have a ready public and the local historian is always under pressure to cater for it. Between popular demand and academic standards New Zealand local history appears suspended in unstable equilibrium. This is enough to condemn it for the tidy-minded. However, seen in another light, local history occupies a 'bridge' position of some significance which it should not abandon. It is a real link between amateur and professional historians; and it would be a very narrow academic who did not recognize that such contact should be heartily encouraged. It can do much to build up the audience we want for the monographs and revised general histories that are so badly needed but are not yet viable in this country in published form. As Professor Morrell has put it, too much of our historical research consists in the 'process of disinterring facts from documents and reinterring them in theses'.[3] We want more published history. It may well be that because local history has moved so quickly off the booksellers' shelves, academic histories, when they come, will not lie remaindered upon them. On the other hand, unless the standard of local history is raised it will innoculate the general reader against anything more demanding on his resources. The solution to the dilemma is two-fold; the public must be educated to want better local history, and the university must both ask more of local history and contribute more to it.

On both broad and narrow grounds, then, we may allow that New Zealand local history has a purpose, but it is not easy to define that purpose. Finberg writes that 'the business of the local historian is to re-enact in his own mind, and to portray for his readers, the Origin, Growth, Decline and Fall of a Local Com-

[3] *Landfall*, Vol. IX, p.173.

munity.'[4] 'Origin and Growth' can well be studied in New Zealand, but is 'Decline and Fall' a helpful concept in a sparsely-populated pioneering country where population and communities are still fluid? Finberg can contemplate in perspective the 'Decline and Fall' of communities since 'the so-called Middle Ages were the formative period in the life of most English towns and villages, and, indeed, covered something like two-thirds of their whole existence.'[5] We, on the other hand, have crammed the social movements of the old world into little more than a century, and radically distorted the pattern of them. We would be ill-advised to regard the communities of, say, the provincial period as our permanent units of local history. Reviewers frequently make the criticism that 'Mr X has failed to sustain the theme and the interest of his story of Tussock County to the present day'. They do not stop to ask whether there is in Tussock a community with a history (apart from annals) after a certain point. Of course Mr X very infrequently asks himself this question, or if he does his answer is usually a patriotic affirmative.

Perhaps our local history pattern of the first hundred years is origin, growth and integration—integration into wider patterns in both area and occupation, reflected in such developments as the decline of dominant localism in politics and the transformation of the 'independent member for Kumara' into the Liberal Party autocrat. One turning point comes when major local developments are no longer undertaken by local bodies or at the initiative of voluntary movements confined to the area. Many New Zealand districts have reached this point, but the phrase 'decline and fall' does not describe their condition or their prospects. The fact is that our 'local community' is changing all the time, and yet we are too much dominated in our thinking by the two best defined communities in our history: the province and the rural district. Because our provinces and their capitals played so important a part in colonial politics, it has been necessary and possible to write provincial history. 'Local history' in New Zealand in fact means the history of country districts outside the provincial or 'metropolitan' centre. The history of the centre is, on the whole, not 'local', and the Otago series recognizes this by not providing for a separate history of Dunedin. Dunedin as the heart and brain of Otago can not be understood in isolation, only as part of a provincial body which had real life.

Is provincial history the more permanent medium of local

[4] Finberg, op. cit. p.9.

[5] ibid., pp.9-10.

history? It is not easy to say. Centripetal tendencies operate at this level, too, and the proportions and the conclusion of Dr A. H. McLintock's *History of Otago* reflect the dilemma on a larger scale.[6] Our pattern of provincial 'communities' is also being altered by the unequal growth of our four main centres, and by the growth of new regional centres. It is too early, in fact, to write local history, apart from local annals, of the period since about 1914. It would seem more profitable in the meantime in social history to deal with institutions and occupational groups rather than with areas. Local history, however, will continue to be written, and can make an important contribution to our knowledge of social development up to about 1914. Some acquaintance with, and feeling for it is essential to the general historian who, immured between the covers of the *Appendices* or the *Abstract of Statistics* is apt to forget that the world of politicians and economists is not New Zealand, and that it is intended to serve the interests of New Zealanders who live in Kaikohe, Taihape, Rangiora, Gore and a thousand farming districts. History ought to deal with community before it tackles the associations which arise from it. It is true that we do not know enough about the place of community in New Zealand history, especially in our cities, where it seems to have been amorphous and often weak. However, we can look to more stable and better defined communities in the countryside. The student of general trends and tensions must try to find the grass roots of our history. This phrase is not related to a whole landscape of metaphor. It is simply saying that the mass of history is made up of the ordinary lives of ordinary people, people who are necessarily treated in the mass by politicians and by the historians who look over their shoulders.[7] Their ordinary virtues or failings, less anonymous in a rural community, in the long run carry health or disease to the heart of the body politic. They are not people different from their rulers who simply pass (by a variety of circumstances) from a private and local environment to a national one. George Forbes' translation from Crystal Brook to the head of the Cabinet table is required study for historians who look for class struggle and clear-cut patterns in New Zealand

[6] See A. H. McLintock, *The History of Otago* (Dunedin 1949), pp.758-69. The writer laments the passing of Otago provincialism, but while condemning 'militant parochialism' cannot bring himself to face the prospect of unchallenged rule by national parties and pressure groups. On a smaller scale, similar inward wrestlings are to be found in my *Amuri*, p.382.

[7] By placing more emphasis on social developments, W. P. Morrell and D. O. W. Hall have, in *A History of New Zealand Life* (1957), given the most balanced general picture of our history that we possess.

politics. Forbes preserved his private face—kindly, stolid, but with a basic shrewdness and tenacity—in public life, and no-one, in the bitter days of the early 'thirties, succeeded in writing the Cheviot farmer large as capitalistic ogre. This private face did not solve New Zealand's economic problems, but its placid solidity did a good deal to lower the temperature of unemployed deputations. If little was gained, the vital things were not lost.

All in all,[8] local history is a wonderful antidote to schematic history, particularly Marxist history, and even the Whig history of Reeves. The 'oligarchs,' the 'squattocracy,' 'the bourgeois radicals' and so on existed only in the pages of the *Lyttelton Times* and the *Maoriland Worker*. They have had historical importance as myths —but they should not be mistaken for facts.

Denis Glover has impaled the local historian in a sentence. 'In a spate of centennial splendours, [he] peers with passionate perspicacity into the hagglings over the first main drain.'[9] But the successful haggler may have used the experience and reputation he gained on its banks to emerge on a wider stage. He at least, in reminiscent mood (and New Zealand politicians are funnier in private than in public), will recall what the main drain meant in his life, and wonder, with his neighbours, whether it was worth the trouble to leave it behind. Many Cabinet ministers have graduated from school committee and county council. Admittedly some of them have behaved as if they were still on the school committee, but in all cases the historian is well advised to look through the Cabinet minister to see something of the school committee man. Our worst politicians have been men without roots, such as Vogel; Reeves would have been a better politician if he had possessed them.

To bring this discussion down to the grass roots of written local history, I propose to examine the Otago series of district histories, of which the first was published in 1948, and the last is expected to appear next year.[10] They form the first enterprise of the kind in Australia or New Zealand. Others may improve on their standard but Otago led the way. No university college has set out to cover

[8] See Finberg, op. cit. pp.14-5.

[9] *N.Z. Listener*, 8 Feb. 1952.

[10] A. H. H. Webster, *Teviot Tapestry;* F. Waite, *Pioneering in South Otago;* W. H. Scotter, *Run, Estate and Farm;* Janet C. Cowan, *Down the Years in the Maniototo;* H. O. Bowman, *Port Chalmers, Gateway to Otago* (all, 1948). H. M. Thompson, *East of the Rock and Pillar;* F. W. G. Miller, *Golden Days of Lake County;* W. R. Mayhew, *Tuapeka, the Land and its People;* D. J. Sumpter and J. J. Lewis, *Faith and Toil, the Story of Tokomairiro;* Margaret S. Shaw and Edgar D. Farrant, *The Taieri Plain—*

its district systematically with theses; the Otago committee set out to publish a comprehensive series that should pay for itself, a grand venture in faith—the faith, mainly, of two men, A .C. Cameron and A. H. McLintock. The committee and its director worked without fee, encouraging and coaxing inexperienced local committees. In some cases, local enterprise was deplorably weak, in others it was obstructive, but in general the committee found sufficient assistance to carry the whole project through. In all but a few cases, the authors were virtually unpaid, practically all did their work part-time, and only a few could be found available with academic or literary experience. In the face of such a magnificent voluntary effort, on which so much can be built, academic fault-finding is beside the point. However, some attempt might be made in a constructive spirit to see what has been gained and what has not been gained for local history by the Otago series.

At the outset, one is confronted by the paradox that a centennial made the histories possible yet made it impossible for them to be definitive as a group. In 1946, it seemed necessary to write and publish quickly in order to capitalize on the prospect of 1948. In view of the success achieved, both authors and committees must now have regrets about their haste and economy. It is true that Otago may reply, 'Our histories at least came out to time'—a palpable hit north of the Waitaki, but not in the vital spot. Indeed, if two or three years is the part-time historian's allotted span, a history to time can hardly be good history.[11]

The sober uniform covers conceal a variety of approach and method, which is to be expected, and of standard which is to be regretted. These variations can only be dealt with in the most selective way. Looking to the more mechanical details first, one must observe that, in general, indexes, maps, statistical lists and bibliographies are not adequate to what should be works of reference, and in many cases the illustrations are put together with little respect for proper sequence. Three volumes have no map, four have no bibliography. An index of four pages for Mr Parcell's volume of 370 pages is the extreme example, but there are others of the same order. Dr Scotter, whose scholarly work puts his

Tales of the Years that are Gone (all, 1949). J. C. Parcell, *Heart of the Desert* (1951); C. W. S. Moore, *The Dunstan* (1953); F. W. G. Miller, *Beyond the Blue Mountains* (1954). The two remaining district histories to be published are: I. O. Roxburgh, *Wanaka,* and C. W. S. Moore, *Northern Approaches.* Two volumes, not district histories, in the Otago series are Eileen L. Soper, *The Otago of our Mothers,* and B. J. Garnier, ed. *The Face of Otago* (both 1948).

[11] See Webster, op. cit., Foreword, for details of history at the double.

book in a class by itself, alone provides references systematically. The decision as a general policy to dispense with them (presumably on grounds of expense) is understandable, but the reader is too often left wondering as to the source of a quotation or the basis of a judgment.

Looking to broader aspects, one can find a great deal to commend. All authors are faced with the problem of resolving a mass of facts of local importance into some manageable form. They employ in varying degrees, the chronological, topical and regional approaches. On the whole, general planning is good, there are few needless eccentricities, legend is eliminated, and anecdote kept within bounds. The result, in keeping with the binding, is sober rather than exciting, but then life in most country districts has not been exciting. Perhaps, since New Zealand local history has suffered from a surfeit of legend and ancestor-worship, it was safest to eschew the 'imaginative' line. Mrs H. M. Thompson regrets that, in her book, 'little attention has been paid to the human side of the story . . . . It is ordained that the historian, even the amateur historian, must not encroach on the preserves of the novelist.'[12] It may be doubted whether any 'ordinance' was issued. On the whole, if a suggestion along these lines was made, it was a wise one.

Mr Mayhew, Miss Cowan and Mrs Thompson achieve a commendable balance on material, though Mr Mayhew's brief remarks on social history contain a promise not altogether fulfilled.[13] It is not easy to judge whether Otago local historians have given too much space to the transitory decade of gold, and the brief boom that left its depressing monuments of dredge-tailings. In perspective, the province has grown from its grass roots, and these mainly of small farmers' planting. Yet the story of squatting pioneers is given far too much space in all local histories, and the development of farm settlement too little.[14]

In its original and systematic approach, Dr Scotter's book stands above its fellows. It is a sustained and scrupulous attempt to show patterns of development in a farming district. A work that deserved more time and space, it is an indispensable example for the New Zealand local historian. Dr Scotter tests the accepted views on land development, and finds many of them wanting when applied to his district. If pattern is his long suit, the virtue of Mr Miller's *Lake County*, the most popular book in the series, is colour. Of course there are lapses, but Mr Miller's mastery of

[12] op. cit., p.98. cf. Waite, p.21.
[13] Mayhew, op. cit., Preface and p.137.
[14] See Scotter, op. cit., Chap. III.

incident and personality remind us that history (even local history) is an art. With his gifts, he has rightly tried 'to encroach on the preserves of the novelist', and his work appears to be soundly based on research. It is hard to pin down the particular quality of Mr Parcell's book, but it may be described as 'movement'. It is not contained so much in his massive vistas of dredge-tailings as in his treatment of the cut and thrust of local debate. Qualities of balance, pattern, colour and movement which are, of course, the qualities of the best historical writing in any field, may be found exemplified in these Otago volumes, and to a lesser extent in some others, but they are far from being characteristic of the series as a whole.

Some improvement in the methods of local history may be suggested on the basis of the Otago series. All authors have difficulty with their townships and the chronicles of council, school, church and club. The township interrupts the flow of the narrative, destroys pattern, and tempts its chronicler into legend and anecdote to relieve the tedium. It is not surprising that Dr Scotter, who sees local history as 'an account of the relationship between men, institutions and events,' goes on to write: 'But history *is expected to be* (italics mine) also the record of the life of the community and of the people who have made it.'[15] His last chapter is therefore devoted to the district townships, in a spirit of duty rather than of conviction. Country towns and townships are lumps whose history is hard to leaven, but they have their rights, and some day local historians will find how to confer them. In the meantime, the only answer seems to be to separate firmly township history and annals—the two when shaken up together produce as muddy a bucketful as ever came from parish pump. Lists of names must be removed to appendices; schools and churches must produce their own jubilee booklets.[16] Inaccuracies and deficiencies in Otago township annals could have been avoided by systematic use of provincial and general government gazettes, and other official records. Local memories are fallible.

In these histories as a whole there are far too few passages from primary sources. If this is the result of a deliberate attempt to avoid the charge of 'scissors and paste' history, it is time that facile and inhibiting phrase was forgotten. While it is certainly true that slabs of secondary writing fitted together with as little

[15] Scotter, op. cit., pp.98-9 and p.131.

[16] cf. Webster, in which seventeen pages are devoted to schools, including the weddings of infant mistresses, twenty-two to church activities, and *eleven* to fruit growing—this in Roxburgh.

mortar as possible only make bad history,[17] well-chosen extracts from contemporary sources are the best means of infusing that elusive quality, 'colour', into historical writing. They are much to be preferred to yet another general undocumented account of station or goldfield life.[18] Though good private local sources appear to be few, Otago historians have a wealth of material in the most vigorous set of country newspapers in New Zealand. They may have been biassed, they may have fostered controversy to boost their tiny circulations, but when they appear in the district histories they bring issues of the past to life. The editors of the *Dunstan Times*, the *Cromwell Argus*, and the *Tuapeka Times* knew their audience and distilled into forthright terms the fuddled arguments in the bars of Alexandra, Cromwell and Lawrence. In the chaotic little newspaper office the historian often may find his Boswell setting down (and often setting up as well) history on the run. Several authors bear witness to the vigour and value of these papers, but deny the reader anything but an occasional sip of heady up-country journalism.

The newspaper editor delights in controversy; the local historian handles it gingerly with some show of reason. He finds he is dealing not only with past and public issues but with present and private sentiments. He finds that the local community is indeed a small, stable world. The nearer he approaches the people of the past, the more he must have to do with their descendants, the most historically-minded folk in his district, often still its leaders, and indeed the people who choose its historian. The simplest way out, and the one chosen by most Otago local historians, is to present the outcome of controversy, but not its process, in which dignity and intelligence may have been regrettably absent. However, valour and indiscretion are sometimes found together, notably in Mr Parcell's book. Some may consider the quarrels of Cromwell and Alexandra a hatchet better buried, others may regard them as 'parish politics', but they must be set down as matters which occupied a particular local generation, and must be seen through the eyes of that generation—provided, of course, that both sides are fairly presented. It would appear, for example, that the land question could have been more vigorously treated through the newspapers. Over that ribbon of discord, the Otago Central railway, the fog of discretion lies most thickly, as it passes through

[17] See *Historical Studies, A. and N.Z.*, Vol. VI, No. 23, pp.339-44, where Geoff Blainey rightly restricts 'scissors and paste' to local history of this 'secondary' kind.

[18] See Mayhew, op. cit., pp.34-5, and pp.53-4 for examples of untested assertions that mar an account not without merit.

one local history after another. I suspect that few local and Dunedin 'notables' came out of the controversy with clear consciences. Finally, the contrast between Dr McLintock's Dunedin politicians, Titan figures exchanging heroic blows, and the local councillors is too great; if it may be argued that there is too much controversy in the provincial volume there is too little in the local histories.

All this is disappointing to the historian of colonial politics, who is seeking for biographical material on which to base a Namierization of the General Assembly and the provincial councils. Most of these men came from rural electorates, whose interests were their primary concern, though provincial demands came a close second. No more remarkable 'local' member ever sat in the House than Vincent Pyke, and Mr Parcell adds much to our knowledge of him and of his difficulties in satisfying sections of his scattered electorate.[19] Yet the same cannot be said of such men as J. C. Brown, J. W. Thomson, Horace Bastings, Donald Reid and Scobie Mackenzie as they appear in the Otago local histories. One obvious reason is that few authors made full use of Parliamentary Debates where 'speeches to Buncombe' often interrupt the course of business, but are invaluable to the local historian.[20]

Another source, of far greater importance to local history, which was not used for this purpose in Otago, was the Inwards Correspondence of the Superintendent. Though Dr McLintock[21] found they contained 'much of a local or district interest', they lay in Wellington, 'a vast mass of manuscript material, some 12,000 documents in all', unindexed. Neither the time nor the resources were available to make them useable at that period, a grievous loss to Otago local history not made more tolerable by the fact that the indexes have subsequently come to light. There is, indeed, not a district in New Zealand whose history can be written without a prolonged period of research in Wellington.

I do not pretend that my analysis of the Otago local histories is complete, but it can not be pursued further here. I shall try to put it in a broader setting. Earlier I considered the place of local history in New Zealand development. I should like to conclude by dealing with the future of local histories and local historians. Have they a future? At one level it is clear that they have. Otago touched off a process which will not exhaust public demand until district by district the New Zealand landscape is covered by local

[19] Parcell, op. cit., Chap. XII.
[20] See McLintock, op. cit., pp.800-3.
[21] ibid., p.796.

histories in provincial groupings. There will be no guarantee that scholarly history will emerge from this process, though the general standard is perceptibly rising. Local interest and initiative have done a great deal, but in the present situation they are necessarily hitched to a vehicle which makes one trip in a century. However unsatisfactory the result, it stands in the way of re-writing and revision.

Somehow local history must be rescued from this self-enclosing process. There seem to be two possible avenues of escape. The first concerns the 'amateur' historian—using that term merely to indicate one who does not earn his living by teaching and writing history as an academic subject. (It is only fair to post-primary history teachers to point out that, at present, their duties leave them little time or energy for 'amateur' research in any substantial way.) The debt of local and regional history—and general history, as well—to the amateur is very great. We have been fortunate in such men as Johannes Andersen, the late F. A. Bett, C. R. Straubel, David Macmillan, G. R. Macdonald and P. B. Maling who, as collectors, researchers and writers, have rescued or dug out invaluable material and made it available to others. It would be an irreparable loss if such work were given less than its due by the growth of 'professional' history. The National Historic Places Trust may well consider sponsoring a journal of regional and local history to which 'amateurs' and 'professionals' are invited to contribute. It would, of course, have an 'antiquarian' section, but it should act as a clearing house for new material, and for new interpretations of New Zealand history in this field. The Trust could also consider inviting the university colleges to join it in organizing a conference on regional and local history. There may be a raising of some academic eyebrows, but we want not fewer but more and better amateur historians.

The other line of advance is obviously through the university colleges. The New Zealand amateur can give lessons to his Australian counterpart;[22] but the professional could well take his lead from Melbourne, where the university history department has been sending out teams of staff and students to collect material in country districts and to encourage local historical groups.[23] A survey of the yearly lists of research projects in *Historical Studies* shows that not much work in local history is being done in university colleges. There are reasons, good and not so good, for this.

[22] See *H.S.A.N.Z.*, Vol. VII, No. 26, pp.211-4, for some light on Australian apathy towards local history.

[23] See *H.S.A.N.Z.*, Vol. VI, No. 21.

On the one hand, the steadily rising standard of theses has meant a corresponding rise in the 'level' of subjects chosen. Would a student seeking first class honours tackle a local history? Students of lesser capabilities have been directed into this field, but in fact local history demands far more skilled research and mature insight than such people can usually achieve. Local history is not 'easier' than the history of a political party, it is simply difficult in different ways—ways not always appreciated.[24] The practice of directing all but a few honours students into documentary study in a set field, examined in two papers, may turn out as a long-range benefit to New Zealand history, since the training and standards achieved under supervision can be readily transferred to other fields later.

The Auckland provincial history project, launched two years ago under the joint editorship of Professors J. Rutherford and H. R. Rodwell, makes no provision for separate local histories. If a series is to be produced, it must be as a separate undertaking. Naturally, I hope that editors and local authorities will consider favourably such a project. There seems no reason why interest in local history should be any less in Auckland than it is in Canterbury and Otago. Auckland University College is particularly strong in New Zealand historical studies, and a series of local histories under its supervision and written by its graduates could set a new standard in the field.

It would not be sufficient for New Zealand local and regional history if the remaining 'unhistoried' districts of New Zealand were covered in this manner. We need continuous and autonomous academic study in the field. If Britain can run to only one Department of Local History (founded at the University College of Leicester in 1947), it is unlikely that New Zealand is ready for one. However, in the next five years those interested may well consider working for a Chair of New Zealand Social History with, say, a staff member specializing in urban history, and another in rural history. It would obviously be situated in Wellington, but its members ought to spend time teaching and conducting research in other centres. When such a department is in being, actively encouraging and co-ordinating amateur as well as professional work, local history in New Zealand will have arrived.

[24] Moore, *The Dunstan* is a fair example of the limitations of a local history based on a thesis without comprehensive revision.

KEITH SINCLAIR

Poems

THE MUSES

We were digging a slit-trench, watching for the Sons of the Sun,
Who never came—no trenches manned by our troop
Of boys could have silenced the massed brass bands of their light.
Smoke-oh was an hourly chance to escape
From the Lance-jack's implausible, amorous reminiscence,
His cackle, his pimples, that over-weening stripe.

It was not true, yet told a deeper truth;
Though I wait, they have not returned. I lay in a patch
Of bush—giant manuka, some lace-bark,
A titoki bejewelled with scarlet fruit and jet-
Black seed—saved by a backing wind from the fire,
Watching my cigarette smoke lift into the sunlight.

As it spiralled upwards like a tree-trunk, with its coil
Round went the ring of trees, a silken wreath
Of dancers, green-skirted, white-armed, shod
With a classic shade, bared breasts of myth;
Above, a disc of sky spun like the infinite
While one whispered: *In art there is no death.*

The moa-hunters' feast is done and heavy
Sleep descended. I cannot hear the song
They painted in caves in that long-silenced time.
Here we begin again—but the Muses sang
When Thrace was young. I sing of our youth
And the fierce gladness of being in the beginning.

THE SHEPHERD

PASTURES where sheep graze in a dream of green
Have known the ripe rye billow
In the wind; but not, beneath the grass,
The ground rise from a tremble to a gigantic tempest—
Tugged by a molten moon in the globe's core—
To far towns falling and a rabbit's close scream.

He, who has seen sands rubied with blood;
Boys, veterans, lovers perform afresh
Gallipolis of valour; then, on leave
In a foreign city, impossibilities of loving;
Has returned and churched his life,
In a high, silent country, in a comfortable hut.

Having watched the kite wheel over Egypt,
He is not sure, he is not sure.
Waking, he peers out at hills
Half expecting the smoke of wings, the dripping bill,
The whimper drowned in a harsh, triumphant cry,
And the kea off to his keep.

Who knows but what, suppliant beneath the salvo
Of rockets, by the incensed Oerlikon, he prayed for
Not green sheep in a glass bubble
Whose snow falls and again, yet has never fallen,
But, in everlastingly tremulous filigree,
The scream wrought in silver.

HUSBAND AND FATHER: BIOGRAPHY WITH SEASCAPE

IODINE jungle, barbed creepers, mucous pythons:
Who could conceive of that Sargasso sea
Where the dead floated in weed like worn-out passions
Taunting their heirs of malice?
There he groaned among the dead men's bones—
Even their bones, the bodies decomposed,
Could not sink decently, but bobbing headstones,
Remained memorials of unburied hatred.
Sun-tanned, strong as a young bull seal,

He had plunged into that deceptive clarity,
Swum an adolescence over glamorous reefs
Where fish bore lanterns through chiming caverns.
A few strokes brought him up to this ravelled flux.
Did he weave the net with blind cunning?
Did it lie in wait for the swimmer? Along the coast
The children played, dreaming of adventures
Far out of depth; of probable wrecks, impossible rescues.
Always the current brushed the glittering shore;
Crystal infants waved through a wall of glass;
And rolled him past in his weed.
Above the land, in her element of light,
Breathed that distant visitor who knocked
In his nightmares; made him pine for night.

ERIK SCHWIMMER

Poems

SEEDS

In spring the seeds
floating above the grass
take direction
from an outer will

the dark mother
often betrayed
likes to be covered over
and shudders at the blade
of avaricious man
She blesses with indifference
the seed's direction
the seed's adventure
her love
keeps it in the air
almost for ever

Some seeds
have an inflammation,
their flight follows a secret will
probed by a thousand mathematicians
isolating forever the upward downward
sideways and backward
forces
by which such seeds are moved,

who are the darkest desire
of the dark mother
recalling her past:
the Titans who were slain
and the monsters in grottoes
from whom mankind was liberated
and the countless ghosts
now starved of white bread and the foam of beer.

Gyrating to her heart
the speckled diseased
seeds, the betrayers
are directed by the inner will
of their destruction.

CANTO A SEVILLA

You liberated
from the score the onewinged kites
notes above the Moorish cathedral
even the ghosts wore masks
because they dared not show
their empty sockets uncovered
for the kites might sear them

Long memories in the thousand lovers
you set afloat over the cobbled square
of mother at the morning market
processions
the long disease
the flare of love everglowing ember

and the murderer's dagger in the slum is not
forgotten
but never mentioned by name, nor called: fear of
the night's
mysteries as also the sun
is never named but called: the mystery
of the day. ever present precision
of asking each arising note: did it happen
like that? for it is a story
of what happened and the whole orchestra
must closely follow: how a street
looked on a certain day
when the sun was slanting over the brilliant leaves
and the note that reminds of another street
is wrong, is an empty
ostentation of esthetes
who do not know just what is happening

help us to set free
from the score the notes of existence
a thousand lovers floating
above the strongwalled quad.

Commentaries

N. S. MOUNTIER

Seato and New Zealand Foreign Policy

THERE is little to suprise one in the communiqué issued by the Canberra meeting of SEATO in March of this year. The fact that there has been no actual warfare in the region over the past year has been taken as a tribute to SEATO's strength; it is mentioned that the Communist offensive has not ceased, but merely changed in tactics to subversion and infiltration in countries not specified;

some suggestions are made for cultural and social exchanges between member countries.

Neither do the speeches of the delegates disclose anything unusual. Whatever passed during the Conference appeared to have little effect on the views of New Zealand's Mr Macdonald, for his closing speech made much the same points as did his opening one. The need for continued vigilance and strength in the face of changing Communist tactics was his major theme. The delegate from the Philippines is reported to have asked for stronger SEATO action on economic problems. The dominating figure of the Conference was Mr Dulles (neither Great Britain nor France found the Conference important enough to warrant sending their Foreign Ministers) and Mr Dulles took the opportunity to state forcibly his Government's reasons for refusing to recognize the Peking Government. The basic reason that may be sifted from a great quantity of moralizing is that the United States considers recognition of Peking to be of no advantage to the United States. The Earl of Home, who represented the United Kingdom, spent some time in emphasizing that Mr Dulles's remarks were not a statement of SEATO policy.

Much of the Conference took place in closed sessions and in one of them the subject of neutralism is reported to have been discussed. It was said that there was a move towards suspending aid to neutralist countries, but that this was not agreed to. In a reported speech, Mr Casey, Australia's delegate, supported the right of a nation to be neutral, and said that Australia would respect any country which followed a *genuine* policy of neutralism (Mr Casey's emphasis). Of course, it is natural enough that neutralism should be a subject for discussion. The fact that this organization is called the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization and yet is without the support of India, Burma, Ceylon or Indonesia is one of its most glaring weaknesses.

It may be worthwhile recalling briefly the circumstances in which SEATO was formed. It was in July 1954 that the war in Indo-China came to an end with an agreement that was not considered altogether satisfactory by the United States. It seemed that Communism had succeeded in advancing its frontier. In September 1954 SEATO was rather hurriedly brought into being with a Conference at Manila. Its primary purpose was to force a stop to Communist advance in the area by offering a threat of armed resistance. Asian reaction to the proposal for SEATO was generally rather less than luke-warm. 'Colonialism' is still a more unpopular word than 'Communism' in Asia, and the United States has manu-

factured distrust by its support of such doubtful heroes as Chiang Kai-Shek, Syngman Rhee and Bao Dai. It was and still is felt that America is far more interested in its anti-Communist campaign than it is in opposing colonialism and supporting really democratic government in Asian countries. Consequently, there is no more probability of the neutralist Asian powers joining SEATO now than there was three years ago. Neither is it probable that Malaya, which will shortly become independent, will show any interest in applying for membership. Insofar as one of SEATO's purposes was to bring together the principal non-Communist nations of Asia in order to strengthen them against Communism from within (which the Canberra communiqué states is now the most active threat) it is a failure.

Nevertheless, SEATO claims that it has succeeded in its major purpose of preventing active Communist aggression in Asia. It is not easy to assess this claim. Certainly there has been no warfare, but factors other than the existence of SEATO may have had an influence in producing this state of affairs. It is easier to see what SEATO has not achieved. There has been no real relaxation of tension in Asia, no movement towards a more secure peace. Indeed, the charge that SEATO must answer is that it hinders explorations into peaceful co-operation. If it is looked upon with suspicion by such nations as India and Burma, it is regarded far more distrustfully by China, against whom it is primarily aimed.

From time to time even such people as President Eisenhower and Sir Winston Churchill emphasize that a nuclear war would bring tremendous devastation to all participants, that there could be no victor from such a war but only wrecked countries, that survival itself may be endangered. But the policy of which SEATO is an expression pays no heed to such remarks. SEATO and similar alliances hope to prevent war by a show of strength, but at the same time are planning how to fight a war if it eventuates. SEATO is interested in lining up as many nations as possible so that 'our side' will be as strong as may be, and so that we shall have bases from which to strike. It used to be said that Britain's frontier was on the Rhine. The frontier of the United States runs from South Korea through Formosa and around to Thailand. In the New Zealand House of Representatives, Mr Shand recently expressed the view that is still held strongly in America: 'if we have to fight, let us fight on the other fellow's territory'. This statement will hardly be likely to encourage Asian members of SEATO, but in any case the hydrogen bomb and the development of the intercontinental missile make nonsense of it.

The old-fashioned policy has a new coat of paint to fit it for the modern world, and it has recently acquired a new name. The name is 'negotiation from strength', although as far as SEATO is concerned, no negotiation is contemplated. (The United States will have no part in negotiating with a Government she prefers to consider non-existent.) The new coat of paint is the argument of the 'great deterrent': it states that no country will risk precipitating a nuclear war because such a war would mean virtual extinction for itself. The corollary runs that the H-bomb is the great protection from war. There is a minor objection to this thesis when it is applied by a country of small area in that New Zealand or Great Britain (where strangely enough the argument flourishes wonderfully) is far more vulnerable to complete obliteration than is a very large country like the U.S.S.R. or China. But the major flaw in the argument is this: it assumes that nations and governments are motivated by a fairly enlightened self-interest. Now, even in times of slight stress governments frequently act unintelligently and against their long-term interest—it is said that the French spent far more on the war in Indo-China than she ever gained from the country; the recent British action in Suez was costly and unprofitable; the apartheid policy of the present South African Government will clearly lead to disaster if it is continued. It is surely unrealistic to hope that in a time of great stress, when fear and righteous indignation are the predominant emotions on both sides, that no government will be foolish enough to use some type of atomic weapon. (The West relies on a superiority in atomic weapons to compensate for a deficiency in manpower.) This would be followed by a more massive retaliation as sure as night follows day. A policy that tries to line up the world into two blocs gambles everything on the commonsense of politicians and generals.

What is an alternative? A constructive attempt to negotiate and come to terms with China and Russia, in which we give some of that concrete evidence of good faith that we are always asking from them. There are some large motes in the eye of the Communist countries and the Western powers are very much aware of them, but it is profitable to consider our own failings. Of course it will be said that the West tried the friendly approach in 1946 and that Russia failed to co-operate and took advantage of Western good intentions. I should not try to suggest that the Communist powers are models of co-operative goodwill. It is only too clear that they are not. But it is also clear that fear of the West has been one of the major causes of their intransigence. Even in 1946 there were American armed forces based as near to Russia as

Greece, West Germany and Japan, and while we may feel certain that America was not and is not contemplating aggressive action, it is not hard to see that Russians may be less confident. In the same way, we in New Zealand may reiterate sincerely that SEATO threatens no-one, that it is purely a defensive alliance, without sounding very convincing to the Chinese. They remember the assistance given by the United States to Chiang Kai-Shek during their civil war, they hear the 'we will return' statements made by the Formosan Government from time to time, read occasionally of United States advocates of 'preventive war', are aware that it is the opposition of the United States that prevents the admission of their Government to the United Nations. There is a great deal of suspicion to be overcome before China will be trustful of the West.

There are several nations, of which India is perhaps the most notable, that remain uncommitted in the cold war. Because they are not a part of either military bloc, and refuse to be bought by promises from either side, they are able to perform very valuable functions of conciliation. They are able to exercise an influence quite out of proportion to their military power. In a world in which trust is a rarity they are trusted a little by both sides. They are not flawless as models of moral uprightness, but they are able to attempt creative peace-making. The reconciliation of nations as far at variance in their sympathies and ideals as China and the United States is a lengthy and difficult task. But in the success of the attempt may lie the hope of a peace that is free from the threat of nuclear destruction. New Zealand could contribute to this. If we were to contract out of the military involvements of SEATO and ANZUS, we could begin exploring the vast possibilities of reconciliation. For there are other tensions besides that between Communism and capitalism: there is that between undeveloped Asia and industrialized Europe and North America, and here New Zealand's help could be invaluable. Once freed from military identification with the West, we could move closer to our Asian neighbours and become a new link between Asia and Europe. The British Commonwealth is a force for peace in the world because in it coloured and white, European, Asian and African meet and consider one another's opinions and needs. New Zealand and Australia stand in a unique position to carry this understanding further. We are members of the Commonwealth, but we have not the stigma of colonialism, and we are geographically near. We can offer friendship and understanding to Asia, with all that that implies. Without some vigorous movement of this sort, the tension between Asian and Western countries can only increase—tech-

nological progress and increasing populations will ensure this.

Understanding more of Asian countries may in some ways prove discomforting. We may begin to feel a little embarrassed by our standard of living, especially when we consider the amount we are spending on aid to underdeveloped countries. We may even become troubled by our immigration policy. But then if we were released from our military commitments we might divert some of the £35 millions that we spend at present on the armed services to increase our relatively minute expenditure on the Colombo plan.

Those who are alarmed by the risk involved in letting down our military guard might weight against it the risk our present policy takes—of being a target in a nuclear war. We can see that if the South African Government were to risk trying to make a multi-racial nation on the basis of equality, they would be beginning to tread in the only direction that can avoid eventual disaster. Our own situation has some similarities. A policy that assumes that nations are necessarily separated into two opposing groups cannot offer the hope that comes with a real attempt at their reconciliation.

G. E. HUGHES

Capital Punishment: A Moral Discussion

THE capital punishment issue *is* a moral issue. It is a sheer confusion to say it is not a moral but a political one; for there are moral and non-moral issues in politics as in everything else.

Capital punishment is often defended as a means to an end. This is not the only line of defence (I shall come to others later), but it is such an important one that I want to begin with some general remarks about means and ends and the moral justification of actions. The means in question are *actions;* the ends are things we hope to achieve as a *result* of those actions. Some practical issues concerning the choice of means to a certain end are moral

issues, some are non-moral. I think the chief relevant points are the following:

1 There are some kinds of actions which are in themselves morally indifferent. Again, there are some ends which are morally indifferent, i.e. we have no special duty to achieve them or to avoid them, it just happens that we or others *want* to achieve them. When we are faced with a choice between morally indifferent means to a morally indifferent end, we have what we may call a purely technical practical problem: our task is simply to decide which of the actions or means will most effectively conduce to the end.

Some ends are not morally indifferent: we have a duty to achieve them (or to try to achieve them). When we are faced with a choice between morally indifferent means to an end of *this* kind, the task of deciding which of the alternative means will most effectively conduce to the end is again a technical problem; but the difference this time is that when we have solved it it becomes our duty to adopt those means. This is one common way (though not the only way) in which things which are in themselves indifferent can become (in the circumstances) not indifferent at all but things we ought to do.

To illustrate: borrowing money is in itself morally indifferent (provided I intend to pay it back). In general, it is not something I ought to do or to avoid doing. But if borrowing money is the only or the most effective means of achieving something at which I *ought* to aim, that may make it my duty to borrow money.

2 Some kinds of actions are not morally indifferent in themselves. Considered by themselves, they are things which we ought to avoid. I do not mean they are things we ought *always* to avoid; I mean that they require justification, and in the absence of such justification it is our duty to avoid them. For example, the deliberate infliction of pain on another human being is of this kind. It may indeed often receive justification, e.g. by being shown to be a means to restoring that person's health; but in the absence of any such justification it is something we ought to avoid—it is not one of those indifferent things which we may do or omit as we please.

When an action of a kind which in itself we ought to avoid is the only possible, or the most efficient, means to an end at which we ought to aim, it sometimes, but not always, becomes legitimate, or even our duty, to do such an action.

3 There are perhaps, but by no means certainly, some kinds of actions which we ought *always* to avoid, actions which nothing

could make morally justifiable, neither conduciveness to an end we ought to achieve nor anything else. I have said it is not certain whether there are such kinds of actions or not; but fortunately this is not a matter which need be discussed here, for a reason I shall mention in a moment.

To apply all this to capital punishment: The deliberate killing of a human being, which capital punishment is—to which of our three classes of actions does this belong? I do not think we need consider seriously the possibility that it is of the first type, the morally indifferent type. Pretty clearly, it belongs to the second or third type. Now for anyone who holds that it belongs to the *third* type, i.e. that it is always wrong no matter what the circumstances, there is no moral *problem* about capital punishment. Such a person will of course regard capital punishment as wrong, just as he will regard the murder of which it is the penalty as wrong.

It is rather for those who regard the killing of a human being as a kind of action which belongs to the second type (i.e. as a kind of action which in general ought to be avoided but which may sometimes be made permissible or even obligatory by the circumstances) that a problem arises. I myself have little doubt that it is to this type that the killing of a human being belongs, and therefore I think a serious moral problem does arise about capital punishment. But now something should be noticed which is not always noticed, and that is that in assigning the deliberate killing of a human being to our second class, we have firmly fixed the onus of proof on the Retentionists and not on the Abolitionists in the debate about capital punishment. The argument is as follows: The deliberate killing of a human being is a thing which in general we have a duty to avoid. Capital punishment is the deliberate killing of a human being, but of course in special circumstances, in view of something done in the past and in the service of certain ends. The question is whether these circumstances and ends are such as to provide an adequate moral justification for the killing of a human being. If they are not, then capital punishment must be wrong. So the mere failure of the Retentionists' arguments, without any positive arguments on the other side, would not leave the issue undecided; it would be sufficient to establish the Abolitionists' case. But the converse does not hold: the mere failure of the Abolitionists' arguments would not be sufficient to establish the Retentionists' case.[1]

[1] Strictly speaking the above argument only holds provided we grant that the killing of a human being is something we ought in general to avoid *more* than we ought to avoid depriving him of his liberty (which is the

Let us therefore look at the arguments the Retentionists can put forward. But before we do so, it may be as well to remark on something which is a common source of confusion in this whole controversy. When one looks at the arguments which have been propounded on either side, one is struck by what an oddly-assorted bunch they are. It is doubtful, indeed, whether anyone could consistently adhere to *all* the arguments on either side (this is particularly true, I think, of the Abolitionists). But there is a natural, though regrettable, tendency for people on one side to imagine that their opponents must maintain the validity of *all* the arguments on the other side, and this can only lead to a misunderstanding of the various possible positions. The truth is, I think, that each side represents an alliance, because of agreement on this particular practical issue, of moral standpoints which are incompatible with one another. This is a theme which could be developed with profit;[2] here, however, I only want to point out that when we hear, e.g. Retentionists complaining of the 'sentimentality' of the Abolitionists' greater concern for murderers than for their victims, or Abolitionists declaiming against the vindictiveness of the Retentionists' determination to have blood for blood, then we ought to reflect that while these may be proper comments on certain elements in the two camps, they have little if anything to do with the question of whether a sound case can be made out by either side.

Let us return from the digression of the last paragraph. The question I have propounded is this: do the factors which are present in capital punishment as distinguished from other acts of killing human beings provide a moral justification of *this* kind of killing? I believe they do not. But let us take them one by one.

In the first place, it is argued that capital punishment is a means to an end, the end of public safety or security; and it may be argued that it conduces to this end (a) because the threat of the death penalty acts as a deterrent to would-be murderers, and (b) because the actual execution of someone who has committed one murder will prevent him from committing another.

Now public security is not a morally indifferent end. It is one

alternative usually suggested by Abolitionists); i.e. that killing him requires *more* justification than locking him up. But this is, I think, both true and commonly admitted by both sides. (Something of course depends on the precise form which the locking up takes, but we need not go into that at present.)

[2] There is a lively and instructive article on this theme in the issue of *Philosophy* for April, 1957 by W. B. Gallie, entitled 'The Lords' Debate on Hanging, July 1956.' I commend it to readers.

which ought to be pursued. It is even an end which may sometimes justify the taking of human life. But I do not think it justifies the institution of capital punishment. Let us take the deterrence issue first. There cannot, I suppose, be much doubt that the threat of the death penalty is *a* deterrent from serious crime. But so is the threat of the usually suggested alternative, namely a long term of some form of penal detention. What we have to do is firstly to compare these in respect of their relative effectiveness as deterrents, and then, bearing the result of that comparison in mind, to raise a moral issue regarding the choice between them.

With regard to the question of comparative effectiveness as deterrents, we have a certain amount of evidence. No doubt we do not have as much as we would wish to have, but we do have some, and if we are to be rational we must form our judgement on the basis of what evidence we have. This evidence comes chiefly in the form of statistics of crime in countries which have tried both systems, but this is not the place to recapitulate it; it is sufficient here to say that there seems to be general agreement among those who have seriously examined it that it provides no reason for thinking that either threat has a greater deterrent power than the other. In other words, each system seems, as far as deterrence is concerned, to serve the end of public security *equally* effectively.[3]

Now for the moral issue. The deliberate killing of a human being is, I have said, one of those things which we ought in general to avoid doing, one of the things which require justification. But the same is true of depriving a man of his liberty. On the other hand, it seems, both systems conduce equally effectively to a good end. Does this mean they are morally on a level?

I do not think so; and in reaching this conclusion I want to appeal to two principles, both of which seem to me acceptable. (Either, incidentally, would do without the other.) The first principle is this:

Of two equally *effective means to a certain good end, one ought to choose that means which involves doing a lesser injury to others in preference to one which involves doing a greater injury.*

[3] I have heard and seen it argued that it is *obvious*, quite apart from the sort of empirical evidence which criminal statistics provide, that the threat of death must be a greater deterrent than the threat of imprisonment. To that I can only insist, and strongly insist, that such *a priori* reasoning is here completely out of place; for the question 'Does A deter more powerfully than B?' is an empirical one, which must be answered in the light of the empirical evidence and not on the basis of any preconceived notions formed independently of that evidence.

It seems evident that putting a man to death involves inflicting on him a greater injury, a more radical deprivation, than sentencing him to penal detention.

The second principle is this:

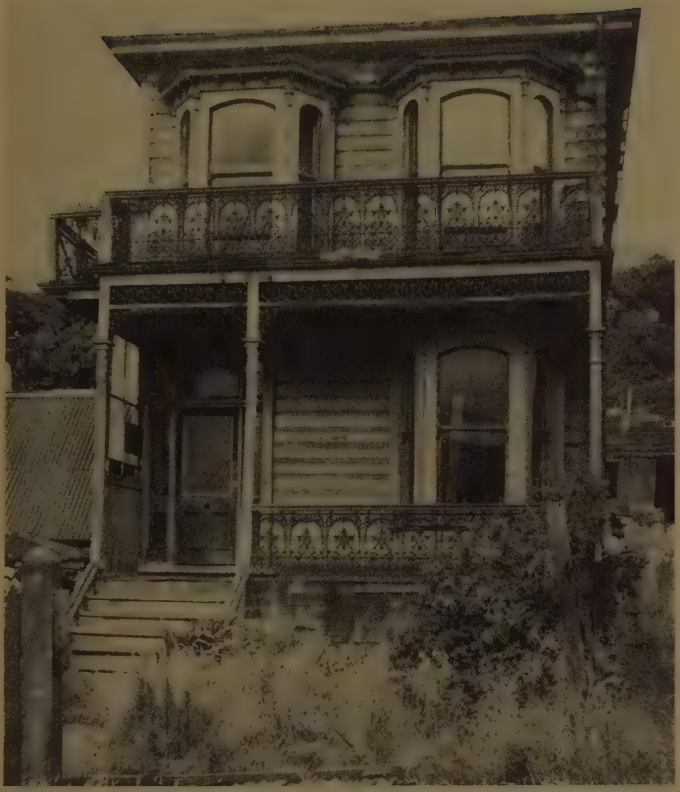
When one is in danger of doing injustice to someone, one ought, other things being equal, to choose a course of action which, if it does turn out to have involved injustice, will allow of revocation or compensation, in preference to a course of action which, if it turns out to have involved injustice, will not allow of these things.

The application of this to the capital punishment issue is obvious. There have been miscarriages of justice. When a man is condemned for murder there is very frequently *some* chance that he may be innocent or insane. If he is sentenced to penal detention and it is subsequently discovered that a miscarriage of justice took place, we can offer him some sort of compensation at least; by hanging him we *by a deliberate act* remove this possibility.

The other ground I mentioned on which it is often argued that capital punishment serves the end of public security is that it prevents a man who has committed one murder from committing another, either on prison officers while he is in prison or on someone else after his release. No doubt it does; no doubt in this respect it is a more effective means to public security than imprisonment is. But the trouble—one trouble at least—with this argument is that it proves at once too much and too little. Too much; for if the contention is that we ought to execute those who are likely to kill others if they have the chance, then we ought to execute, e.g. homicidal maniacs. Too little; for *some* murderers, for one reason or another, are as little likely to attempt a second murder as the average reader of *Landfall* is to attempt his first one. It is very difficult indeed to formulate the argument in such a way as to justify the execution of precisely those and only those who according to the Retentionists ought to be hanged.

I want now to consider the other main line of argument which is advanced on the Retentionist side, a line of argument which takes its stand not on the relation of capital punishment to a future end, but on its relation to a past event, namely the committing of the crime of which it is the penalty. The fact that a wrong has been done, it is argued, makes appropriate the exacting of a certain penalty; the more serious the wrong done, the heavier the penalty it makes appropriate; and when the wrongdoing is the deliberate killing of a human being, the appropriate penalty is death.

Two distinguishable contentions are involved in this argument.



FOUR WELLINGTON BUILDINGS

Photographs by

LES CLEVELAND

MISSIONS TO SEAMEN

HONG KONG CAFE
HONG KONG CAFE
HONG KONG

1888
JOHN CASTLE CHEMISTS
Best Values

One is an appeal to what is usually called the retributive principle, a principle which states that when punishment is justified it is justified because a wrong has been done (rather than because some future end will be secured) and that the heaviness of the penalty should be determined by reference to the gravity of the crime (rather than by reference to, say, what will be needed to deter others). The other is the further contention that in the case of a particular type of crime the right penalty is death. This further contention is of course compatible with the general retributive principle, but it certainly does not follow from it.

I want to say a little about the general retributive principle of punishment. It seems to have a bad name in many quarters, but this I think is largely because people are apt to associate the word 'retributive' with ideas of vengeance which with good reason they regard as repellent. Such associations are however quite misleading, and once we put them out of our mind we can I think see that a theory or practical system of punishment which is to be a just one must contain the retributive principle as *one* of its principles. I say this largely because it seems to me that any theory of punishment which takes no account of the retributive principle at all will in the end be found to justify the punishment of the innocent; and this I regard as such an important matter that I hope we never forget the retributive principle or try to do without it. But I do not mean that I think the retributive principle ought to be the *only* one which should guide the working of a penal system.[4] In fact, if we raise the question of what penalty is appropriate to a given crime, then apart from telling us that, other things being equal, a more serious crime should have a heavier penalty, the principle really tells us nothing. (At least any *acceptable* form of the principle tells us nothing. There might be a crude form of it which held that the penalty should resemble the crime in kind. That certainly leads to the idea of capital punishment as a penalty for murder; but none of us seriously holds the principle in that form.) Murder is of course a serious crime; and if we are to have a penal system at all and make it a just one, a serious penalty will be in place. But once we rid our minds of the idea that the appropriate penalty is one which resembles the crime, it is not obvious that the appropriate penalty is death. In fact it is not—and I think cannot be—obvious just by contemplating the nature of the crime itself, what the penalty ought to be. The question we have to ask

[4] Our treatment of first offenders, e.g. shows clearly enough that some other principle as well as the retributive one *does* guide the operation of our actual penal system.

is something like this: here is a situation in which someone has committed the serious crime of murder; what is the most appropriate treatment of him in view of the whole situation, including his past crime, his relations to the rest of the community, his abilities, his outlook on life and the possibilities of change in that outlook, and so on? And when I ask myself that question, I cannot help replying that provided the interests of public security (of which I have already spoken) are secured, a penalty which affords him the opportunity of changing his attitudes for the better and of doing something useful with the rest of his life 'fits' the total situation better than one which precludes these things.

Perhaps the most plausible line of argument which might be urged against this conclusion in order to justify the death penalty is this: that by killing a fellow human being the murderer has forfeited his right to live. And indeed, it must be admitted that if he no longer has any right to live, it cannot be wrong to kill him. It may be as well to remark here that the argument one sometimes hears on the lips of Abolitionists, to the effect that 'you can't remedy one wrong (the murder) by committing another wrong (killing the murderer)' involves a complete begging of the question; for the contention of the Retentionist is not that when one wrong has been done you are entitled to do another wrong, but precisely that the fact that someone has committed a murder makes it not wrong at all but *right* to kill him. But what are we to say about this notion of forfeiting rights? I think we have to say that there is a lot in it. I may forfeit my right to pursue a certain activity by flagrantly misusing that right while I possess it. I may forfeit my right to borrow books from a library by wilfully destroying the books I do borrow; I may forfeit my right to drive a car along the public highway by driving to the public danger. In general, I may be held to have forfeited my right to pursue a certain activity when I have given evidence that I cannot be trusted to pursue it without serious danger or inconvenience to others. But justice requires that we should decide what rights a man has forfeited by reference to just those activities which he has shown himself to have abused and to be likely to abuse. It would be unjust to deprive me of my driving licence because I have destroyed library books. Now the man who has committed a murder has certainly misused a very important right—the right to move freely among other people as a trusted member of society —in a particularly flagrant way; and we may even grant that he has thereby shown himself likely to misuse it in the future. He may therefore be said to have forfeited some important right or

rights. But the right to *life*? His life, after all, is the totality of all his activities; and to forfeit his right to life he must I think have shown himself to have misused and to be likely to misuse *all* his activities. That is something I do not think we are ever entitled to assume about anyone. And therefore justice seems to me to require that when we deprive him of the rights he has misused, we still secure to him as far as possible the rights to pursue activities which he has not misused. (How this works out in terms of policies for penal reform and conditions of imprisonment is a large question which, however important, cannot be discussed here.)

A rejoinder I have heard made to all this is the following: All that is very well, but we simply cannot afford it. We have only limited resources and a vast number of needs to satisfy; and the money and trouble it takes to keep murderers in prison for what everyone admits would be a long time would be better spent on such things as hospitals and the care of old people who find it difficult to make ends meet.

There are so many things to say in reply to this that it is difficult to know where to begin. The argument owes its appeal to the fact that it displays capital punishment as a combination of a sound business proposition and an application of the moral principle of putting the most deserving cases first. We might begin, however, by enquiring what proportion of the national income would in fact be expended in keeping alive the (fortunately) small number of criminals who under our present system are hanged. Then we might begin to wonder whether it need cost anything at all; I admit I do not know the facts, but it does not on the face of it seem absurd to suggest that during a long stretch of imprisonment a man might be given useful work to do which would at least pay for his keep, or even leave something over (for the hospitals and the aged, perhaps). But the most important issues are not these. They only begin to emerge when we ask what lies behind the argument, what position it occupies in the wider outlook of its propounder. And here there are various possibilities. It might be advanced by someone who held that a murderer has no right to live anyway, and who was using the present argument simply as an extra, utilitarian argument for exercising our right to kill him. In that case, I have already said what I think about the contention that a murderer has no right to live. But the argument might be advanced by someone who was prepared to grant that the murderer *has* a right to live, and then the contention is that we should deprive him of this right because it costs too

much to grant it to him. The insidiousness of this can be brought out in two ways. First, suppose it is true that every murderer kept alive in prison means one piece of equipment less for the hospitals (or a smaller car for some government official?), though we have seen reason to doubt this; the same will be true of every bank robber and every forger kept alive in prison. And if innocent hospital patients are more deserving cases than murderers, they are also more deserving than bank robbers and forgers. Where is the argument leading us? Second, it is true that our resources are limited; and it does follow from this that there may arise circumstances (as in fact there frequently do) in which we *cannot* grant certain people all the rights which in happier circumstances we ought to grant them (there aren't enough drugs to go round, so some people will have to be left to die, and we can't be morally blamed for this). But the cases are not parallel, though it is easy to think they are. What the argument we are considering overlooks is that there is a vast moral difference between not granting someone a right which we *cannot* grant him, and actively depriving him of a fundamental right which we *can* grant him. It is true that some cases are more deserving than others; but to suggest that we should therefore *kill* the less deserving in order to do better by the more deserving is to introduce a terrifying principle into the conduct of public affairs.

One might open up a whole new discussion by asking: on what precise grounds is it maintained that a murderer has a lesser moral claim on us than other people, whether these be the sick, the aged, or simply the riders on tramcars? That is indeed a question which needs looking into; but here it must be left, in the words of the textbooks, as an exercise to the reader.

Reviews

NEW ZEALAND POETRY YEARBOOK. VOL. VI. 1956-7. An Annual Collection edited by Louis Johnson. *Pegasus Press.* 10s. 6d.

IT IS difficult to say anything constructive in criticism of such a mixed bunch as the poems in this volume. Presumably the Yearbook is intended to present not just the best of the year's work,

but that portion of the best which reaches a certain standard. Such is the range of poetic merit in this volume that only the over-optimistic assumption that the upper limits reach really exceptional heights would allow us to call the lower limits 'good'. The editor, in his introduction, writes that the collection is smaller than in previous years but more compact. If 'compactness' implies uniformity of merit, then the book should have been considerably smaller to be satisfactory.

Poets no doubt get satisfaction from writing verse. But the only justification for expecting other people to buy and attempt to appreciate a poem is the belief that something of general, not just private and personal value, has been said, and said more skilfully and effectively than would be possible without the peculiar devices of verse. The measure of their successful employment lies in the apparent inevitability and aptness of the resulting poem. Only when there is both a convincing need and an unobtrusive use of deliberate artistry, of skilful effort on the poet's part, does the reader gain that distinctive delight in the seeming ease and felicity of expression which he expects from poetry.

Judged by this standard, judged in the light of the questions 'Was this poem really necessary? Was it worth saying? Would a less pretentious statement have served equally well?' many of the poems in the Yearbook fail. We forget them as soon as we have read them and are not sorry to have done so, since they did not provide us with the best way of saying something worth saying. Only rarely is this failure due to obscurity. I find the Wolfskehl translations obscure, dependent for their force on too special a background for the average reader of verse. More frequently the fault lies in the triteness of what is said and the absence of any distinction in the saying of it. The crafts of verse are toyed with rather than used to some purpose. Too rarely does the rhyme or rhythm of the poem contribute an essential element. The formal discipline appears imposed upon reluctant material, not blended into a convincingly inevitable whole. When this happens, form obtrudes and seems clumsy—as in Jocelyn Henrici's 'Ophelia' where the contrivance of a cycle of line terminations seems a regular element, alien in an otherwise incoherent poem. In many poems, e.g. K. M. Jowsey's 'You Have' and W. D. Leadbetters 'Elegy', there is *no* discernible discipline, not even an undigested one. In the last-mentioned poem there are vivid images, but a collection of memorable images does not make a good poem. Only when the poem as a whole, by the coherence and cumulative effect of all its parts, by their cohesion both in sense and by formal device, adds up to one total integrated image do we have a successful poem, a finished artifact.

The exceptions from these general criticisms come in the main from the more familiar poets, James K. Baxter, M. K. Joseph,

Kendrick Smithyman, W. H. Oliver, and one poem excellent in its simplicity and tightness of structure from Victor O'Leary. Within this small group of good poems there is considerable variety of excellence. Mr Baxter provides what we have come to expect—eloquence in a declamatory romantic vein on central universal themes. We forgive the touch of bombast because of the unfailing rightness of phrase. W. H. Oliver provides poems of a new and tougher calibre than hitherto. These poems, for their combination of a close-knit texture with a conversational cadence, are the most exciting in the volume. Comparable in measure and balance of mood, as poetry of thoughtful comment, are the poems of Kendrick Smithyman, with their very distinctive and at times eccentric note. His uncannily effective 'Cousin Emily and the Night Visitor' is perhaps the most memorable and singular poem in the collection.

Of the other familiar names, James Bertram, Charles Brasch, Allen Curnow, J. R. Hervey exhibit their proven mastery over words in poems which neither disappoint, nor provide special delight or interest. Louis Johnson and Denis Glover are disappointing; the latter's poem, 'Flame', is a disjointed and facile piece, trading too much on the established Glover *genre*. Although the most general fault of the bad verse is pretentiousness, even more distasteful is its reverse side—a feigned naiveté which we find in 'Flame', in W. Hart Smith's Ballads, and in all the singularly unsuccessful attempts at satire represented in the book.

Of the newcomers the only one to impress is Bennie Thompson, the author of the briefest contribution to the book, a slight but delightfully sufficient poem whose economy deserves quotation

> Across the paddocks
> of turnips and hay
> Is a hill-slope smooth
> and velvet-grey.
>
> With a scarlet tractor
> the farmer's boy
> Is changing the velvet
> to corduroy.

The only general conclusion to draw from this glimpse at the current Yearbook is that we have a few competent poets among us, for which fact we should be critically grateful. But we would do more to encourage and increase good writing in this country by refusing the mediocre than by using it to eke out what is good to make up a sizeable volume.

Annette Stoop

THE ESTATE. Charles Brasch. *The Caxton Press.* 15s.

CHARLES Brasch's new volume is divided into two parts—shorter poems, and a long poem, 'The Estate'. I shall review these separately: the latter first, because it was written before most of the shorter poems and seems to me not as impressive as they are.

I

'The Estate' is divided into thirty-four sections. It is a series of meditations, mainly on themes of personal relationships and the problems of identity and difference produced by them, the whole work addressed to a single person. The difference between this and the shorter poems is that 'The Estate' contains in a sense the raw material that in the other work is translated into public, objective poetry. After a number of readings my reaction is one of disappointment that so much fine writing should have been spent on a poem which must, with certain exceptions, remain a private communication. This is not an objection to Mr Brasch's subject as such (an objection which would invalidate Shakespeare's sonnets), but to his refusal at times to consider the obscurity that results in poetry which is more concerned with being faithful to an experience than with getting itself over the fence into the world where it must live. 'The Estate' only manages to do both these things in a few sections. The two sections included in Chapman's Oxford anthology, and ii, xviii, xix, xxx, and xxxiv attain a satisfying impersonality. The remainder seem to me more or less equally divided between poems that half emerge into a world beyond their origin, and poems which remain shadows in a private world. (How for example are we to be sure whether the 'Puck' of section xv is a domestic pet, a man—or Puck? And when one has decided that he is a man, one simply regrets that such a well-written poem should remain obscure in its reference.)

Reading 'The Estate' through I had at times an image of a man standing on a narrow ledge facing into the storm of his own emotions. He does not fall, or get agitated, or shout, but stands resolutely assessing, questioning, attempting to come to terms with his situation, refusing to run from it. He is admirable. I respect his honesty, his calm, his perceptiveness, his grace of manner and voice. But the poem is in a sense a view of life, and for myself I find it too narrow, too passionately stoical at the expense of irony and variety. I cannot suppress the wish that an umbrella or a kerosene tin would blow down the wind and give us both a rest from such intensity and singleness.

This reaction is, I am sure, the result of the poem's being addressed uncompromisingly to a specific person. Mr Brasch in this poem is himself. He *ought to be* a poet, which would mean, in a poem of this kind, putting on a creative mask, speaking his lines

to a persona, and remembering always that there is an audience out there in the dark beyond the stage. Instead, we have lines like

> You are the limitless dark defining the circle
> Of fireside, lamplight; you the inconceivable
> Guest out of nowhere suddenly fiery and singing
> Before me, midnight word of transfiguration.

where a private fantasy, intense perhaps to those involved, remains to the reader only an eccentric mystery.

Yet even some of the most personal sections of the poem do avoid self-indulgence by their artistry, their insight, and a factor usually irrelevant to poetic success or failure, sincerity. Through the rhetorical questions (a device Mr Brasch overworks in this poem) comes a convincing desire to understand; and by this means the poem touches and loses universality: the terminal is loose, but the current gets through in bursts. There is a continuing struggle to realize situations and to include every element of their complexity. One is surprised by the areas of experience, often expressed abstractly, that are made real by the poet's control over word and rhythm. So that at its best, determination to be faithful to an actual moment and its particular insight becomes almost as powerful a discipline as the more purely aesthetic (Yeatsian) impulse to hold a fine gesture in the face of *all* moments. A tense, contemplative stillness is wrung out of the flux of things—

> Clear through dusk the waters
> Fall in the forest; now the first dews come
> With the first star: stillness: and unextinguished
> The peaks float, dark in the transparent west.
> Can we preserve till morning, for many a morning,
> Making it ours through day and night and year,
> This strength, this ripeness of heart by all earth's powers
> Confirmed, by crystal air, transfiguring snow,
> All that we know, all that we are, unfading?

If my remarks seem to contradict themselves it is because I am affected differently by different sections of the poem, and there is not space in this review to be more precise. But the successes occur despite the overall direction of the poem, not because of it. The poem as a total work of art seems to me a failure. Its successes nevertheless rank with the best of the shorter poems.

II

The trend of Mr Brasch's work has been towards the generalization of a myth, but the generalization as statement is perhaps not

so important as the emotion which hangs on it—a universal emotion of regret for lost purity and peace. He has perfected the prophetic voice until, for the sake of the poem, we come to accept the specifically local myth as if it were true.

The tendency of his earlier work is continued in this new volume, but a great deal more is added. His technical skill has developed, and in consequence he is able to include a wider range of experience. The stoic grace and reverent cadence remain, and the subject is still not landscape but an inner struggle which finds its symbols in landscape. But the landscape is brought into clearer focus than before. Here is the first stanza in the book—

> Ngaio and broadleaf people the grassy coast
> Of green hills bent to the water
> That stirs, hardly stirs in the wide arms of the bay,
> Fingering the rocks lightly, for a season of calm
> Laid asleep in its iron bed
> Under the circling air, the dome of light.

These lines are not exceptional in the book's first section—they represent the standard Mr Brasch has set himself and consistently attained. For that reason perhaps, the myth carries greater force and conviction than it does, say, in 'The Land and the People', a sequence of four poems in his first volume, where neither land nor people are clearly realized.

The myth is that of painful adaptation on a soil which is a living force hostile to our intrusion, and of our collective guilt at the violence with which we alter after what was here 'before our headlong time broke on these waters'. Our arrival on these islands becomes a kind of local Original Sin, the destruction of a Paradise of calm.

In many of these new poems, what probably begins as private awareness of inadequacy and frustration finds public acknowledgement in this form. The normal pains of existence that belong to the man, transcend themselves into an impersonal structure. In one poem a vision of ruins which may in the future inhabit now empty spaces, is seen with nostalgia because it is a sign of a reconciliation that must come between man and nature. Whether one sees this psychologically (a death-wish), theologically (unacknowledged desire to be at peace with God), or in the local terms it offers, the poem is a good example of the Romantic poet finding in one aspect of his own situation a valid general symbol.

But there is also in this book an attempt to find the beginnings of reconciliation in the present. In 'Letter from Thurlby Domain' a house which has crumbled is seen as the payment of a debt, a sacrifice to the landscape. By its decay, the product of man's intrusion proves itself also 'natural'. And there are poems looking

outward to specific people, particularly to men who have learned better than most 'the trick of standing upright here'—the Rabbiter for example, or Willi Fels

> Shaping in a garden for fifty seasons
> The strong slow lives of plants, the rare and homely,
> Into an order sought by the imagination,
> A precinct green and calm

Even if one is suspicious of the Pathetic Fallacy, it is only when landscape or seascape becomes an anxious mother instead of an alien god that one's disbelief breaks the rope of rhetoric on which it is willingly suspended.

> For everyone who sails away
> The waves are sighing night and day,
> And tides hold their breath at turning
> To listen, listen for that morning
> That brings the exile home at last

Here the personality attributed to the sea is inappropriate. Much better (and more typical of the volume as a whole) is

> that fathomless ocean breaking about us
> In sleep, and all things borne to dissolution.

Mr Brasch's poems are written with great care. They have not the dazzling intellectual quality of Allen Curnow's, nor the toughness of Denis Glover's. His precision is of a different kind, and exhibits itself (as Eliot's does in the *Quartets*) more often in the selection of an exact word than in the making of exciting images. His lines seem to fall naturally into an elegiac cadence, and perhaps the hesitancy of style in some of his earliest published poems followed the realization that this cadence was not poetry in itself. For some poets certain rhythms may exist that correspond to states of mind in which poetry is written. On occasions the poet may be aware of these rhythms simply as patterns of sound. His problem is to fill them with words, all of them meaningful, none of them superfluous. In the determination to attain verbal accuracy the natural cadence is lost for a time, and this seems to have happened in some of the poems of *The Land and the People*: Mr Brasch is refusing to take the easy way. (Hence perhaps, Mr Curnow's complaint about 'the diffident, cautious pace of the verse'.) In this new book the two elements are fused more perfectly than ever before—neither surrenders anything to the other. The tension necessary to poetry develops in a balance between the precision of the single word and an astonishing beauty of cadence—

They are that memory
Where each event finds place, where all that's acted,
Suffered, thought, enters, being strained through time;
Which they receive whether they sleep or wake,
Which they must harbour in safest ignorance.

The eighteen shorter poems alone would place this volume among the most worthwhile products of New Zealand writing. The technical achievement is of a very high order, and critical objections it seems to me could only take the form of personal expressions of preference for another kind of poetry.

C. K. Stead

FIRE WITHOUT PHOENIX. W. H. Oliver. *The Caxton Press.* 12s. 6d.

MR Oliver's book is a selection of his work between 1946 and 1954. As a selection it is fairly rigorous, but one might quarrel with it. Of Mr Oliver's other work, I missed, for example, 'Death and the Maiden' (though it has been anthologized by Chapman & Bennett), and one or two of the group of short poems published in *Landfall* (II, 255), and parts of 'In a World of Ice' (*Landfall*, VI, 141 and *Poetry Year Book* 1952). 'A View of the City' (*Landfall*, VIII, 165) is a fragment perhaps reserved for longer publication.

Nevertheless, as it stands, it forms a comprehensive whole, arranged in two contrasted sections, the first written mainly here, the second mainly in England. The first section creates some quite individual variations on our national interior landscape—the beach and its debris, shells, falling birds; dreamscapes of ice and fire. Nearly all are introspective, and some have a private quality about them—as in the frozen pastoral of 'And I, in Arcady', or the evocatively subaqueous island of Mr Oliver's *Tempest* poems—

And these, for this time dead, while currents knock
Gently against their resting vessel's side,
Swim in the cold green place the sea keeps whole.

Is he thinking, one wonders, of Peter Brook's Stratford production of some years ago? In any case, these three short poems have the virtue of bringing something new out of that inexhaustible play, suggesting that the island is indeed something beyond man's life.

Mr Oliver is a deft writer, and only in a few places permits himself a weak or clumsy line. His chief temptation, to which he occasionally succumbs, is that of abstraction, the statement insufficiently manifested as language or as image. An example would be—

Now word and gesture probe the wilderness;
Combative shadows ape true flesh and blood;
We populate the waste with incubi
Whose counterfeits, we trust, will stem the flood

Of grief and growth:

Here the effect is confused, both too violent and not violent enough. But this is at least the vice of a poet who thinks, and his most cogent poems are those in which the thought meets a clean-cut and sufficient image. Such is the satisfying short poem, 'Sea Legend', which uses as symbols the sea-urchin's shell and the pine-cone on the beach—

Both of them empty, having spent their living matter,
The seed and the soft flesh, where all is uncouth and brutal,
A shore littered with the shells of a hundred crayfish
Beaten to death by a high sea on a plateau
Of smooth round stones . . . .

If one finds this kind of effect more in the second half of the book, it is perhaps because contact with the new material of the English scene gives body to his verse. The earlier poems tend to abstraction because they are largely introspective, the later ones are more outgoing. The excluded poems are usually of this more interior kind, and Mr Oliver would perhaps feel that he has renounced the more esoteric manner of 'In a World of Ice'. As is natural in a poet of Mr Oliver's profession, he has an eye to the historic subject, and can pause at a broken Gothic arch at Abingdon, or, visiting Blenheim Palace,

Watch through the wintry mist, endless
Columns of trees like an army cross the ridge.

But these are not antiquarian poems: we are still in the present. And they are perhaps most effective when some everyday incident is suddenly perceived juxtaposed against the historic background, and indifferent to it. Dogs and children scamper in Blenheim Park; adolescents gangle among the ruins; or, in another, striking poem, a soldier and his girl are seen quarrelling in Radcliffe Square—

They, separating, left the square empty
As the bells became still. Then the shouldering dome and the spire
Springing to heaven on a crutch of stone
Were lost in a scurry of rain. Heaven was everywhere
Present, everywhere mourned their loss.

There is a huge, understated irony in the contrast between the two bitter young people and the unacknowledged monuments of piety and learning which are the setting for their 'trivial hate'.

The ability to use subjects and attitudes like these seems to show that he has shared something of the mood of the younger English poets—especially, one would think, the soberer ones like John Holloway or Philip Larkin—but not too much. The differences are as instructive as the resemblances, not only for Mr Oliver's own work, but for English and New Zealand poetry generally. It can be seen, for example, if one compares two pieces on superficially similar subjects, Mr Oliver's 'From a Train in the Midlands', and Mr Philip Larkin's 'I Remember, I Remember'. Mr Larkin is also looking from a train-window in the Midlands—at Coventry, to be precise; but what he sees there is his own unexciting and unromantic youth. In fact, Mr Larkin (not here at his best) is being an Angry Young Man. In contrast, Mr Oliver sees the slag-heaps and pit-heads, a land laid out for burial, yet perhaps not dead—

> She is murdered, buried, forgotten.
> But around the heaps of slack
> Children flower like fennel
> And threaten to bring her back.

He is still the self-forgetting observer, recording a *paysage moralisé*, and that seems to be a form that comes aptly to a New Zealand poet, combining observation, sympathy and detachment.

In both these two divisions of the book are poems intended to define attitudes for the poet. Of these, both 'Ceremony of Pain' and 'In the Fields of My Father's Youth' are more comprehensive than the one specifically called 'An Attitude for a New Zealand Poet'. The long poem, 'In the Fields of My Father's Youth', is particularly interesting, for it shows how Mr Oliver, like other younger poets—Mr Pat Wilson, for example, in 'Staying at Ballisodare'—can write poetry concerned neither with nostalgia for 'Home' nor with rejection of the father-image, but with the pleasure and sadness of rediscovery. For Mr Wilson, the return journey underwrites the legend of Yeats. For Mr Oliver, the return to old fields validates his own self. It is a kind of *East Coker*, a journey back to the roots—he speaks in a literal sense of being 'made radical once more'; which is not to deny his particular allegiance to this country, and whatever future it implies.

One would like to think of that as a characteristic attitude of the younger poets, a stage of development. An old battle is over, and there is no need to take sides anymore. The New Zealand traveller can, with equanimity, sketch an unruined St Paul's from an unbroken London Bridge. Of his migrant father Mr Oliver writes—

Can I who live by his flight relinquish either
the peasant's dream or the eloquent manor house?
Both were his first and every birthday gift.

Here, at least, Mr Oliver achieves a poem like a signpost, stating an attitude for his generation.

M. K. Joseph

SINCE THEN. Denis Glover. *The Mermaid Press.* 10s. 6d.

THE Mermaid, Robert Graves says, is a post-classical siren. This, the first of our mermaids, has been heard recently beating it up on a breadboard but here in the earliest of her musics she has uncomfortably revealed herself not fish, flesh nor good red herring. Put into her mother's trade she sits piping and crooning, beguiling the local mariner, and not to his profit.

Patently I have not Mr Glover's flair for fancies and can only plod stodgily after as he skips through his memory-book. For the moment I shall venture to skip with him, right over the insufficiencies of *Since Then* as a piece of work from his press since, although it is rather a habit to exaggerate them, the matters of the printer are wholly secondary matters. The affairs of Mr Glover as poet are otherwise.

Mr Glover is obviously one of the ablest and most virtuous of our poets. No one rightly should expect him to be always able, always successful, but this collection (which reaches back to gather trivia of ten years ago along with later things) is over-weighted with unsuccessful pieces. Few of them have been worked at as they should have been; there has been no rich change worked on them with the sea-blue pencil. In the long run this won't matter. The indiscretions will be put aside. But we are concerned with and concerned for Right Now, and concerned that Mr Glover's affairs of the moment, as many of these are, will meet those standards which he has done so much to establish, and which he has insisted must be kept in view.

Trifles of the moment may last—witness Rochester at his easiest. They do so because they preserve the moment without waiving a sense of ultimate responsibility, which is best preserved by rigorous craftsmanship, along with a singular personality. *Since Then* is undoubtedly a Glover book so far as it displays his (at best) entertaining fancy, the cutter-and-thruster, the casually committed man and his sparse rhythms, and so far as it indulges his sentiment and sentimentality, his respect for the man of action and for action which may be its own justification. It sustains Mr Glover's long

debate with himself and his country and Queen Victoria, but repeatedly it assumes, tactlessly, that these are vigorous enough to cover an insufficient resolution in the poems ('The Old Soldier', say, or the squib 'Egalitarianism') or the lack of dramatic tension in a song such as 'Flame' which has memorable lines but remains defective as a poem.

Tactlessness, in respect of a practice in poetry, is an arguable condition, the argument being contingent on a qualified and modifiable taste for which, it has been said, there is no substitute. It may be that what seems to be failure in conception or carrying-out is simply not to my taste. Yet one can see beyond this impasse of subjective judgment, I would hazard, in some short song. 'Norwegian Seamen' may do. It has a ring about it, of the sea. It makes a certain limited rational statement. It creates something, but only something, of a mood. But what does it propose? That we are to respond to an exhortation from a speaker who may be a god unknown, to rejoice in the thin edge of glory (whatever that may mean) because it is possible (however unlikely) to a Norwegian freighter with a company of roaring 'bully boys'. Bully boys? A prospect of the seamen, through a sentimental glass which is surely not by post-war Zeiss or Kershaw.

Many of the poems of *Since Then* appear to be limited and specific on first reading. (I am making allowance for a wider taste, because on first reading many did not seem so to me.) A closer reading shows them indefinite and moody, and what sounded witty or funny falls flat. The four blank rounds of page 16 may be considered again, with little pleasure. As for 'The Air': no. Enough of censure, and starchy sermonizing.

If *Since Then* is in the main a loss, and an annoyance because too often one remembers Denis Glover's happier catches, it is not a total loss. 'Loki's Daughter's Palace' is still welcome, landlady and all. 'Laiene' is a genuine note, and the Mick Stimson verses, if overdone, were worth doing. 'Comfort Me Still' and 'Mortal Remains', yes, they rest comfortably with us. And there are good lines in the others which will last out the larger corpus as 'Something wet in a geographer's dry dream'.

Kendrick Smithyman

ENGRAVINGS ON WOOD. E. Mervyn Taylor. *The Mermaid Press.* 2 guineas.

WOOD engraving in New Zealand has, thanks to E. Mervyn Taylor, become one of the more familiar graphic arts. The latest collection of his work to be published is a most comprehensive and varied one.

All the visual arts in this country draw heavily from British

and European experiment and example, and wood engraving in its recent revival is no exception. One finds on turning over the pages hints of the technique of Agnes Miller Parker, the litheness in drawing especially in the female figure, of Blaire Hughes-Stanton, and sometimes the crisp clarity of Robert Gibbings. A wood block has certain limitations, and the techniques used by Mr Taylor are those that suit his liking for scrupulous detail and minute enrichments of surface. This is probably why 'Maori Girl' and 'Maori Boy' are the least successful. Their large scale and simplicity of subject matter call for a bolder, rougher technique. The artist is at home however in some of the smaller studies of plants, birds and animals, where, not so rigidly tied, he has allowed his flair for unity of design full scope. These best illustrate Mr Taylor's hope in his preface that 'there is no reason why a small school of engravers could not develop here'. His earlier illustrations in pen and ink showed a personal approach with much richness of fine line, and here and there in this collection, one finds the same outlook especially in 'Waipoua River' and 'Giant Kauri'. There is a strong sense of the dank brooding unfriendliness of our evergreen bush, and I consider the latter engraving his most important work in this medium to date.

The tailpieces, bookplates and other engravings bear comparison with some of their best English equivalents, and would embellish very pleasantly many better class books published in New Zealand. The lettering is clean and sure and the initial letters and small ornaments could well find their way into the stock of our better printing houses.

A trend in illustrating Maori folk-lore in recent years has been to use robust swirling compositions, which while making use of Maori detail, convey little in their conception of the blood-freezing strangeness of native mythology. They are the pictorial equivalent of a Maori translation of the Apocalypse. Given sufficient change of detail these same compositions would fit the context of the Opening of the Seventh Seal, or the Woman in Purple and Scarlet, with equal facility. Mr Taylor shows three examples of which 'Te Kotuku Rerenga Tahi' could quite easily accompany St John on Patmos, or William Blake.

The book is attractively presented and the blocks (with the exception of 'War Canoe' which is a reproduction) are as crisp and clear as one could wish. I doubt the wisdom of using 72 point Albertus type on the wrapper, since it comes rather clumsy at that size and argues with the delicacy of the surrounding engravings.

We are indebted to both Mr Taylor and the Mermaid Press for making available a fine set of some seventy-eight engravings for barely the price of one.

W. A. Sutton

THE FEATHERED SERPENT. Roland Robinson. *Edwards and Shaw*. 30s.

THIS attractive, impressive book is a sequal to *Legend and Dreaming*, Roland Robinson's shorter first collection of Australian aboriginal myths and legends. It was commissioned by the Commonwealth Literary Fund—a commission which enabled the author and his wife to travel for a year among the tribes of Central and Northern Australia; where, gaining the confidence of many 'old-men', sitting down with them either apart in 'the shade' of desert trees, or on ceremonial grounds while rituals were in progress, he recorded their own translations of song-cycles and ritual chants. Four coloured bark paintings made especially to illustrate some of the legends, have been beautifully reproduced; as well as many smaller engravings, and a map. The dust-jacket itself is of brilliant design.

In his introduction Mr Robinson describes the genesis of the expedition, the characters of his informants, and something of their ways of life, their beliefs, and the significance these sacred legends have for them; and in a few deft—if all too brief—sentences he evokes the splendour of the lands they inhabit. Awareness of landscape is also a feature of the illuminating foreword by Professor Strehlow, a leading authority on the Australian aborigines.

It is obvious that one of the aims, and one of the achievements of this book is authenticity: which is important at present in Australia, where debased aboriginal motifs are being used increasingly in sign-writing and touristic crafts; where there is also widespread interest in the contemporary aborigine, and a mounting concern at his plight. In this context the dedication of the book should not be overlooked: 'to the aborigines of Australia, to all those "old-men" who received me with kindness and patience, and who honoured me with their confidence and friendship'.

The tales themselves Mr Robinson has ingeniously recounted in the broken English of his informants; producing—not, of course, the musical, repetitive poetry of the originals, but—a prose which is successful in its own right; a prose of simple controlled rhythms, of immediacy, charm, and occasional felicities such as: 'The two women dive down. They swim down and down. Further, and more further down they swim. Quick now the water the clouds. Like smoke it is dark, dark. The water swirls over and over. Those two women can never find their way back. Those two women never come up. Bubbles come up. The water is booming, like thunder. The water is swirling over and over.'

Some of the parallels with other legends are interesting, particularly the use of 'sing' whereby, magically, objects and creatures can be 'sung' into being; which occurs also throughout the Kalevala. It is a word, a concept, which appears to lie at the heart of mytho-poetry.

Each tale is preceded by explanatory notes, which are helpful for the most part; but it seems a dubious claim that 'The Flood and the Bird-men provides a significant parallel to the Biblical account'. This myth was recorded in an area of long-standing missionary influence; and its similarity to the Flood of Genesis must seem as suspicious to New Zealanders as John White's Ngaitahu 'Deluge' legend, since discredited by Sir Peter Buck.

But New Zealanders can learn at least three lessons from the book.

It proves that with enthusiasm and imagination patron, publisher and author can co-operate to produce, for the general reader, an interpretation of the native culture that need not be sentimental, superficial, or precious. (It is to be hoped that before long Mr Theo Schoon's researches into Maori cave-painting receive equally sympathetic attention.)

The book also shows that artistic expeditions can be as valuable as scientific ones: pointing a suggestion for the latter to be accompanied not only by journalists and photographers, but, as of old, by artists.

The third lesson is from an anthropologist to artists. Professor Strehlow writes: 'Once our eyes have begun to glimpse the totemic landscape in our great mountains and vast plains, in our green rain forests and glowing red sandhills, in our dry inland salt lakes and northern lilied lagoons, then the day is near when our art and literature will become truly Australian, without any artificial forcing or laboured insincerity.'

Such an exploration of the New Zealand landscape too—in terms not only of the Maori's historical occupation, but of his vital, empathetic and mythopoeic relationships with all its natural features—would enrich the local understanding, the sensibility, and the art which again are emerging from rather than being transplanted on to the land.

John Caselberg

THE NEW ZEALAND JOURNAL 1842-44 OF JOHN B. WILLIAMS OF SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS. Edited with an account of his life, by Robert W. Kenny. *Peabody Museum of Salem and Brown University Press.* $6.

IN the first half of the nineteenth century there could be found in most of the remoter parts of the world isolated Americans who seemed almost the type of their countrymen as presented in caricature and lampoon—adventurous but shrewd, careful that adventure should serve the main chance; vociferous in the expression of puritanical morality, but rarely doing anything either to correct

the evils they castigated or to remove themselves beyond their influence; and jealous of their country's prestige, but usually identifying that prestige with the success and smooth running of their private business. Such a man was John B. Williams, member of a Salem, Massachusetts, mercantile and maritime family, who at the end of December 1842 arrived at the Bay of Islands to take up the position of consul for the United States in New Zealand. He had visited the Bay ten years earlier on a whaleship, but though he now found that whaling in these waters was much less important than formerly, travel through the country as far as the Bay of Plenty convinced him that there were potentialities of trade in timber, flax, and kauri gum.

It was apparently to arrange financial backing that barely a year later, in February 1844, he went off on leave to America. He did not return for 18 months, and then his ship, laden with trade goods, was wrecked on the Hawkes Bay coast. His stay in New Zealand was again brief, although he found time, in conjunction with J. S. Polack, to arrange the first commercial shipment of kauri gum to the United States. He saw greater trading opportunities, however, in the islands of the Pacific, and during his stay overseas had secured the additional appointment of United States commercial agent in the Fiji islands. In February 1846 he set up his headquarters at Lauthala Bay, and from that place not only directed his business, but performed his New Zealand consular duties, the day-to-day needs of that office, first at the Bay of Islands and later at Auckland, being met by a succession of vice-consuls of his own appointing. This somewhat strange arrangement appears to have been accepted without question by the Secretary of State. Williams's kauri gum trading was far surpassed by his regular trade in bêche-de-mer and sandalwood to China from Fiji, and by special ventures such as the shipment of pigs, pumpkins, poultry and yams to the Californian goldfields in 1849 and 1850. So he continued, with occasional visits to New Zealand, and less frequent ones to the United States, until his death in 1860.

Williams's *Journal*, now published in pleasant format, is a peculiar document. Though it begins with a date, and is chaptered '1843' and '1844', it is neither a diary nor a journal. It is in fact an assemblage of miscellaneous and unorganized information about New Zealand, partly based on personal observation and partly derived from other sources, mixing sailing directions with descriptions of plant and birds. natural resources and Maori customs, the whole being punctuated every few pages by diatribes against the licentiousness of Europeans at the Bay of Islands. Williams arouses hopes that his presentation of colonial officials and traders may be illuminating, but he is almost certainly not a trustworthy witness, for he appears to mention mainly those who, by rivalling or limiting his personal projects, aroused his anger. Even his account of

the Maori character, which could have been useful, appears to be distorted by a determination to show the Maori as in every way the opposite of the corrupt and corrupting Europeans.

Mr Kenny's biographical introduction is likely to be more highly valued than the *Journal* itself, for it throws light on an unusual personality and on an obscure phase of New Zealand-American relations.

C. R. Straubel

Correspondence

To The Editor

Sir: Allow me to offer a footnote to Mr P. J. O'Farrell's tart appreciation in June *Landfall* of a book of my authorship. Your reviewer left himself open to misunderstanding in his statement that I have 'a ready knowledge of case histories relating to the rights and liberties of the individual, from . . . to the trial in 1955 of Fitzpatrick and Browne at the Bar of the [Australian] House of Representatives.' I am not the Fitzpatrick referred to, or his relation except in so far as we are all members of the human family.

Brian Fitzpatrick

Victoria

NEW CONTRIBUTORS

Peter Bland was born in England in 1934 and came to New Zealand in 1954. A part-time arts student at Victoria University College. Has contributed to *Numbers, Arena* and to university publications.

Erik Schwimmer. Born in the Netherlands in 1923. Came to New Zealand in 1940. A graduate in classics from Victoria College, and closely associated with the publication *Arachne.* Edits *Te Ao Hou* for the Maori Affairs Department.

W. J. Gardner. Born 1915, Waiau, North Canterbury. Educated at Christ's College and Canterbury College, where he is a lecturer in History. Author of *The Amuri, a County History.* Chairman of the Canterbury Regional Committee of the National Historic Places Trust.

N. S. Mountier was born in Wellington in 1925 and graduated from Victoria University College. Is employed in the Department of Agriculture.

G. E. Hughes. Born in Eire 1918. Educated at the University of Glasgow and Trinity College, Cambridge. Taught philosophy at Glasgow, Cardiff and Bangor. Ordained priest of the Church of England. At present professor of philosophy at Victoria University College. Has contributed articles to *Mind, Philosophy,* etc.

Annette Stoop. Born 1929 and educated at Otago University and Somerville College, Oxford. At present lecturer in philosophy at Auckland University College.

C. R. Straubel was born in Christchurch in 1906, and educated at Christchurch Boys' High and Auckland University College. Publishing editor, Whitcombe and Tombs Ltd. Editor of the *Whaling Journal of Capt. W. B. Rhodes;* joint author of the first volume of *A History of Canterbury,* shortly to appear.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

Poetry and Cyprus. A Manifesto for Moderns. D'Arcy Cresswell. The Trireme Press.

Owls do Cry. Janet Frame. The Pegasus Press. 15s.

The Sicilian Origin of the Odyssey. A study of the topographical evidence. L. G. Pocock. New Zealand University Press. 10s.

The Song of Hagar to the Patriarch Abraham. Ethel Anderson. Edwards and Shaw. 15s.

Rum and Coco-Cola. Ralph de Boissiere. Australasian Book Society.

The Wicked and the Fair. H. Drake-Brockman. Angus and Robertson. 22s. 6d.

Social Life in Ireland, 1800-45. Edited by R. B. McDowell. Published for the Cultural Relations Committee of Ireland, in association with Radio Eireann, by Colm O Lochlann, Dublin, at the Sign of the Three Candles.

Nettle and Laughter. Royal Murdoch. Fine Editions Press. New York.

Paradise of Dissent. South Australia 1829-57. Douglas Pike. Longmans, Green and Co. 70s.

Newsletter of the British Drama League (N.Z.) Incorp. Vol. V. Nos. 1 and 2, 1957.

Northern World. A Journal of North European Friendship. Edited by Roger Pearson. Vol. I. No. 6, May-June 1957. 1s. 6d.

Notes

SOME of the most compelling visual images of Australia yet created are to be found in the work of the painter Sidney Nolan. A few of his paintings were included in an Australian exhibition shown at Auckland Art Gallery early this year; he has since been given the distinction of a retrospective one-man show at the Whitechapel Gallery in London.

No painter before has presented a picture of Australia comparable in the force of its imagery with that which Nolan constructs. It is an Australia partly observed and partly invented, more real than in any realist painting because more powerfully evocative, recreated with great intensity as a clearly defined, visionary country of the imagination. By its dead blue-green creosote waters, through its dry scrub and straggling bluegum, rides an explorer haggard like his drooping mount, led on or shadowed by a gaunt semi-mythical bird that swims overhead. From a miniature dust-yellow early-colonial Melbourne, Burke and Wills set off on camel-back into the dust of the unknown interior. In landscapes of bare shattered rock and wild leaves the Holy Family rest on their flight, or St Francis receives the stigmata. And again and again Ned Kelly and his followers appear, cylindered in black armour with white eye-slits, in figure like a rudimentary cross, seen against ruined walls, or fording a river, or riding into the void with shotgun across saddle, man alone confronting hostile society and the savagely indifferent world. Then there are landscapes without figures, reality remade in the fire of contemplation, of that hot heart of Australia which lesser painters have only been able to lay out cold in stony literalness; the dry dazzling rock-red wilderness evoked in John Caselberg's story 'The Halt' (*Landfall*, June 1956). In later paintings move figures less sharply rendered, more nearly pure symbol, white in vaguely lucent waters, against bare enormous limbs of trees, or exposed sacrificially before an apocalyptic Turneresque drama of sky and ocean.

When Nolan leaves Australia behind his invention falters; his recent Italian pictures, in which black outlines of the Cross and other symbols of the Passion are superimposed on scenes of bombed villages, have about them an air of the *voulu* and of that fashionable art world which his best work is simply unaware of. In that work, all the other painting he has seen lends him wings, aids his vision without deflecting it; and his passionate imagin-

even the hand that had no fingers. Then the secretary banged the table with his bunched fist.

'O.K. Now some of you know Harold Frame, you know him well and all he's done for you. He is your represen'tive in all that's big, those of you who don't know who he is.'

He paused and gazed, arm wriggling nude at the scrap of white paper in his hand.

'Well it's this way men. We come here at this meeting to show a friend of us all what we think of him, to show we appreciate all he done for us not on'y while he worked here, but the whole time he been in the union from its earliest days. So that's what we're all here for. I'll ask Mr Frame, Harold here, to say a few words.'

As the secretary sat down, the representative pinched his fingers over his lips and leaned his elbows on the table. He rubbed his tongue round the outline of his lips. He stood up and was short behind the table. He put his hands upon the table and eased his weight on them. Then he stood erect and removed his orange tie. He clipped his thumbs behind his police and firemen's braces. When he did something, he paused and the men waiting, were silent.

'This is giving me a lot of pleasure and I'd like to thank Dave and Tiger an' all of you for asking me here today. I come up because I wanted to when I heard you was having a stop-work meeting. I thought there was something wrong when I first heard but I see this is a good thing to give up your time for.'

He snuffed his speech with his big fat hand as he wiped his hand across his mouth and his nose.

'I speak to you as a friend and I'm on your side but I want to be impartial today seeing there's nothing wrong like I first thought. No, I want to say that I come here when I heard what you was doing because I liked it. To honour a man among men as they say. A good thing. I liked it.'

He threw his orange tie upon the table in front of him and back clipped his hand behind the leg of his braces.

'The man you honour this way,' he threw out his bosom with a heavy sigh, 'I worked with once myself and believe me, I can appreciate the thoughts you have of him.'

The men looked at a dry old man near the door. The dry old man with his peanut face wrinkled like a raisin, looked at the floor.

'Yes, you can look at him there and say there's a man. And we all know, that man is Charlie.'

He tongued upon the beads of sweat suspended by his pouting upper lip above his mouth. Then he wiped away the wetness of

the sweat and of his tongue with the back of his hand.

'Now Charlie's not a young man no more. He's been a bloody precious long time in the union. He was old when I came in and he's taken a lot of kicks in the guts to help get you boys where you are now. Men like Charlie don't grow on trees, as they say.'

He took out a handkerchief and wiped his red face. His mouth opened in a yawn as he wiped out the hollows round his eyes. Then he grinned, holding the handkerchief just in front of his face.

'I haven't been all that good myself you know. I'm a bit of a rebel myself. Back in the early thirties there when things was tough I stuck no beating about the bush with them. Christ no. Now take a job like this. They paid you tenpence an hour and they had a bright bastard working you to keep up the pace. He got another fourpence an hour. You didn't walk then, you ran. And if you let the pacer get away from you, you were fired. Bang. No questions asked by christ. And there was a hundred more to take your place. Surplus labour and labour had no say in the government then. You did what they said your wife and your kids needed all you could get to feed their bellies.' The fat face had set hard, as if it had become concrete, and white from the sun. And the voice had hushed the room and there was only Frame's heavy breathing like an old compressing machine. 'That's harsh treatment. A man loses his dignity and don't tell me some men ain't got dignity. No man likes to see his wife and his kids in a queue for food and his wife going out to get some work so she can feed her kids. But I saw my wife do that, many times.'

The words as he spoke them seemed to weigh him down and his fat body slumped a little between his hands spread on the table. But the words had an effect on the men and the silence and the hut were his to fill. The men were quiet as he spoke, they held the butts of their cigarettes from their mouths and the smoke slowly circulated in a sluggish blue cloud then coiled as it rolled into the draught from the windows. The fat man held his head up for a supreme moment, but a restlessness crept like a rat among the heavy black stained leather boots that shuffled on the wooden floor as the hot feet were eased. But the fat man still held their attention in his thick clammy hand.

'But I tell you,' he said, 'Charlie took it a different way to me. Charlie took it the passive way and he got kicked around. The union, boys, let me tell you, has its big fighters. But they don't make the union, all of the union. The union, like any other thing with faith in its ranks has had its martyrs. A martyr boys, is a man who suffers not only the kicks in the guts, but he suffers it

up here too,' he jabbed his stumpy index finger at his head, 'he feels it bloody bad in his mind, because he knows wrong, bad rotten wrong is being done and he scents it all round under his nose and he can hardly stop himself spewing when he smells it. But he takes all the stones, just like Charlie took them in the thirties and it was the right way. I know that now, it was the right way. You see what you got now. It wasn't always like this. Believe me, it wasn't.'

There was a stirring among the men, like a wind waking suddenly in the long grass with the changing day outside the hut. Perhaps Frame did not sense the hustle in the hut as the minutes slipped by and the money slipped away with the passing minutes. Perhaps the meeting was not necessary now that they had heard all Frame said. But they did not want to hear about what no longer existed. Tough perhaps. Tough on Charlie and on Frame and on old Dave. But wasting money dragging it all up. They didn't want to hear it all over again. But a tall red-faced blonde man stood up and he spoke from the end of the hut.

'Harold I just want to put in a few words and say we really appreciate all done for us in them days. It was bloody tough then and we know we got it easy now. The union's got to stay a tight unit so we don't let them days come on us again. That's what I want to say.'

The fat man stood with a heavy obsequious look upon his face as he listened. Then he looked at the red-faced man and spoke with lowered head.

'That's lovely to hear Tom. And I know that we will leave the union in damn good hands. Now Charlie.'

He sniffed on the back of his hairless hand and looked to the door. The men gazed at the dry-apple raisin-wrinkled old man, who did not seem to gather the thread of Frame's words, but his head swayed up and down and his narrow slit squint eyes ran water over the leather of his cheeks. He looked at nobody in the hut, but only upon the black mud-grimed floor, as if the thin rope of his neck could not support a raised head. Frame leaned across the wooden table, bending it into a hollow upon its trestle legs, to the old man.

'Now I'll ask Charlie to the table so he can accept this gift from you all.'

The old man with lowered head crept to the table and stood, a shy-eyed quivering mouse, beside Frame, who unclipped a hand from under his police and firemen's braces and placed it on the thin bone-humped shoulder beside him.

'Charlie on'y you here can know what honour this is for me. On'y you Charlie.'

The old man did not look at Frame, nor did he seem to hear Frame speaking. His eyes were fixed upon the heavy feet spread over the floor. He was a tired old man, an old man with the guts kicked out of him, not only in the thirties was his guts kicked out but the union had kicked him with its strikes and its stop-work meetings and its talk talk talk. But Frame's face had warmed to the old man and his hand caressed the twisted shoulder beneath its grasp.

'Charlie man, I'd like to give you this from all these boys here and it's in recognition of all you've done in the union, for all you've done in keeping the union what it is, man.'

Frame took the parcel handed to him by the president. Then he placed the parcel on the corner of the table, near to the old man.

'Here it is Charlie, a nice chiming clock the boys here have got you and I am really happy to make this presentation on behalf of all your work-mates.'

The old man Charlie took the heavy fat hand in his own chisel-thin fingers and shook it with quick pumps up and down. The presentation had a formal air and the spread-out legs were drawn up with the shuffling of heavy boots and a quick bang of clapping. Charlie halted a moment and turned to the men, his head bobbing as if his neck were a spring, coiled and twisted and rust-brown lean with the years of weather and hunger. His eyes flitted for a moment like bright lights, over the men in the hut, then as suddenly they became dull and opaque like frosted glass, as if he saw nothing in the blue-haze belly of the hut. Then his tongue slid in a drool like a child's tongue from his mouth and two wet white saliva streams ran from the corners of his mouth. And upon his face, there came, like water rising to the boil, a slow spreading toothless infantile grin, as he turned to the men in the hut. The laugh became full upon his face, but his eyes lay flat like glistening glass. Then he retracted his tongue and half-bowed, half-bent to the men.

'It is . . . good . . . nice you think this way. I . . . good don't get kicked like Mr Frame say they kick yeah . . . they know sucker and they . . . kick. . . .' He raised a forefinger, thick as a four-inch nail, jabbed at the air, at the men, poking the gesture at them as his tongue rolled round in his mouth for words. 'They kick in the guts you know? They kick in . . . sure, you know, in the guts.' He stumbled his hand to the pit of his stomach, 'in the guts . . . here they do you know?'

Then Charlie stood with his head squeezed into his sunken chest and his head lolled in a rhythm, slowly as if the spring of his neck were vibrating gently. The meaty hand of Mr Frame stroked upon the old man's bone-hump shoulder. Then Frame spread his arm.

'Boys, I want you to remember this day and all that it means to Charlie and to yourselves and to the union we all make up.'

His voice rang deeply, his face held a solemn almost pious heaviness of expression and his arm was sustained, flat fat palm to the men, as if he were giving a benediction.

'We, we boys, and other boys like us in this country and all over the country, make the union. And we must be one boys, we must be a unit. We have our rights, we got them the hard way and we got ways to keep them as we want them. We got good cards boys, we got a full hand and they know we got that good hand. If they start kicking then that good hand will hold our weapons boys, the hammer and the sickle.'

Frame's voice had risen with his beliefs, it had come like a sudden cloud bringing a bad storm, creeping quietly from an unnoticed horizon, then throwing its fury upon the unsuspecting men.

'It's true boys, there's only one end to the fight and we are that end. In our hands we hold the strings and we ain't letting them strings go for nobody. A little of the hammer and the sickle and they see we don't fool round no more sweating our guts out for tenpence an hour, running in with squealers, going with empty bellies. No boys, we got the strings tight now and we got to hold them. And the union will hold them boys, the union can hold them.'

The sweat cracked out over Frame's face, his eyes glowed with a wet glister in them and his fat heavy body stretched up for height and for power as he screamed his words into the hut. The men looked at Frame, and they looked at old Charlie with his imbecile grin and his joggling head, as he swung upon a leg of Frame's police and firemen's braces, circling like a child on a swing with the stretch of the braces gently turning him round to the men then back and away from the men. Then talk rose loudly from the men, they stood up from the backless forms and stamped their feet loudly and heavily upon the wooden floor, laughing and gesticulating and talking as the meeting broke from Frame's paternal grip. He stood before them, his fat face bulging and his body quivering and working up strength to gain control over the men.

'Shuddup. Shut up and sit down,' Frame screamed.

Glowering, reddening and sweating, his hands looped heavily under the legs of his braces, Frame banged the floor with his foot.

'What are you now you've got your rights?'

He leaned back, and his stomach came out bulging round and broad as his head went erect with his red face sneering. His eyes narrowed with contempt, his thick mouth hung loose as he hissed his words like spit upon the men. Then he banged the table with his fist and the table swayed upon its trestle legs.

'I'll tell you. What you are? Gutless. Just squealers. Bastards, all of you. You got no guts to get kicked. You work for money, not for principles. And the union isn't proud of you, believe me, the union isn't proud of you. You sit here, you stay in here but you want to get out for your money. You fear the loss of money and the money comes easy to you. You'll go out there and you'll like them and you'll lick their boots and take their money. You don't even do a good job. Why? Because you have no principles in anything. You're playing on the labour market and there's no need for you to stick together. No, don't tell me no boys. I see it in your faces. You're not interested in Charlie's work you got no time for what he's done and his like has done.'

He became quiet, his voice was even now, as if an understanding had come to him as he stood there, as if he had seen in the men a thing he had long feared he would see. And he knew that the thing he feared was in the men. The men didn't need convictions any more because their rights were well established, like accepted law, certain automatic principles that went with the job, so to speak, and everybody knew that the rights held good. Mr Frame almost laughed. It was the result of what he had suffered for. He had given them this, they got their money. In thirty years, they had it this way and they didn't need a union. He felt it all beneath the skin of the meeting, like a big dog in a crowd, ready to snap when the crowd became angry. They did not pay union fees for preachers, the union didn't need preachers. The union wasn't a movement, it was just—just good manners.

Frame picked up his tie and flicked the collar of his shirt.

'If that's the way you want it boys.'

He spoke quietly, almost brokenly, not looking at the men, but at the parcel sitting near the corner of the table. His eyes held a deliberate stare, his body did not move and the men were silent. Then his big red hairless hands knotted the orange tie round his thick neck. Sweat was boiling from his face.

'If that's the way you want it, I don't see Charlie got any need for this.'

The president rose to his feet, the blue handkerchief still in his hand.

'No don't thank me Dave. I don't want their thanks.'

Frame turned the collar down over his orange tie. He took the old raisin-faced Charlie, smaller and more hunched over now, by the arm and they walked through the silent men to the door, leaving the chiming clock in its cardboard carton on the bare board table. With his other hand, Frame tugged at a leg of his police and firemen's braces.

JOHN BOYD

The Watchers

No plough has known this land, nor fragile seed
Flared into sunlight, conquered the cobwebbed groves;
Only the dark-shirted watchers, rifles at the ready
Prowl the flimsy fence-line, freeze when a shadow moves

And blindly fire. Slow ants inhabit the broken turrets,
Sparrows swarm where once laughter, a minstrel's pain
And two long-dead lovers wrought an acanthus tapestry.
But now the watchers walk, reviling the iron rain

That swells their fears, batters the saw-toothed hills
Like gunshot. With bodies half-shackled
They cannot search far, nor know their master's face.
Silver wolves mate in the battlements, dead

Loves accuse their own bought blood; the fence quivers
With more escapes. And now they watch another night
grow
Acid with frost, knowing, their cartridge belts empty,
They must face with weapons slung the stubborn shadows.

MICHAEL ELLIS

Orders for Angels

Nor does my guardian angel move a feather,
swim with a swarm of angels over streets,
plunge with a storm of angels over towns,
drive by my side in traffic, watch the traffic,
or like an escort aircraft over a downed pilot hover.

Orders for angels alter with the case.
Mine is a still angel. Envy those awarded
angels who see their charges home from parties,
are anxious, watch how the curtains blow,
move to the careless cigarette, press out the embers,
baffle the devil who would burn down the place
(loving moth angels who make moth sorties
from bedroom doors against cupboard devils,
return and circle round the pillow guarded),
I dare not. Mine is a huge angel. In one way
there is no room for his wings in this world now.
He remembers

the ringing, singing circles and the shepherds,
funnel of wings and faces in the night sky
and small at the far end the glimpse of Heaven
(down through the cone of wings the light from the heart of Heaven,
drenching an angel's wing, starring an eye),
the grasses separate in the light, the amazed men,
their sheep like maggots white on the dark hill—
my angel has not flown so low since then.

Yet in his heart in his place in the high circle
he is careful for me under the shadow of the throne of God.
He would be by my side on the march but his place is at headquarters,
part of the bright circumference bounding space,
part of the light circumference bounding time,

the promised answer, instant and for ever—
yet guarding as with claws my sticks of treasure.
(Soldiers go easier with their kit at base,
their kin at home.
The photograph beside the barrack cot
orders the soldier better than the loved face.)
Angel, stay always in your place in Heaven

to guide, when news of angels brushing low
troubles untutored eyes to ask for more,
my heart to ask and answer which is less:
My image always in your heart in Heaven?
The lift and slant of sea-gulls at my door?

JAMES COURAGE

Flowers on the Table

ALTHOUGH Walter Henry Blakiston saw himself as a cheerful, successful, hard-natured man of middle age, the truth was that there had been times lately when childish tears had come into his eyes and he had wept. At first, when this so surprisingly came about, he had secretly taken to pouring himself a drink in an attempt to ignore the little weakness. Sometimes the whisky stopped the fit of sorrow and sometimes it did not. Lately it had not stopped it. He was puzzled by this. He was a doctor of medicine and did not care for the inexplicable, the mysterious. So he would shut himself away in his own consulting room, sit at his desk, disconnect the telephone, and try to reason with himself while he stared at the glass of whisky.

He did not tell his wife of his tears since she believed that she had married a man whose life contained nothing of importance he had not at some time told her. Walter Blakiston loved his wife but was convinced that she did not love him. Of late there had been trouble—unanswered remarks, banged doors, silences pregnant with nothing but seeming indifference. Or he would find her

lying taut on the sofa, her eyes shut in her round handsome face.

'I'm exhausted,' she said. 'I have no time to be myself.'

'No.' He sighed slowly. 'It isn't that.'

Her smile mocked him. 'You're always so sure of everything, aren't you.'

'Not at all sure, my dear. I wish I were.'

It was not, however, predominantly of her or of this lapse of sympathy between them that he thought when the little fit of unexpected sorrow came on, to pain his mind. No, it must be something else, something deeper, something lost.

So he would sit and reason with himself against his tears—the tears of some younger man perhaps, buried in his own heart. Was that it—the sorrow of some younger Walter? Nevertheless the grief was not exclusively, or at all, for any younger incarnation of himself. Of that he was fairly certain. But if his tears were shed for another, then for whom? For a long time he could not be sure: he had no answer. All the same he was not without recollections. As he sat with his glass of whisky the outlines of a certain place and occasion, hitherto forgotten, came little by little to trouble him: the feeling and colour of an episode not perhaps remarkable in itself but at least poignant enough to be recapturable after forty years. And so it came about that one evening, with some feeling of wonder and recognition, he sat staring inwardly and at last at one particular little scene wholly before him.

With his father, then, he found himself seated at one of the smaller tables near the back of a restaurant strange to them both. It was late afternoon. His father had fetched him without warning from the school where he, Walter, was a boarder in his first term. The two of them had driven in his father's car through the flat provincial city to this restaurant in a side-street and now they sat beside one of the windows down the long bright room. A potted geranium stood on a chipped saucer between them, in the middle of the white table-cloth. The geranium flowers were vermilion, very clean above dark green leaves, the red petals fully open and giving off a sweetish hot scent that was only half pleasant.

The boy kept his eyes on the geranium, hiding himself a little behind it. He was afraid of his father and frightened because the thought had come into his mind that his father had collected him so unexpectedly from school to give him bad news of his mother. His mother, he knew, had been ill at home in the country, and she had not written to him for a fortnight. Now, in his fear, he would not ask his father about his mother. He hid his face behind

the geranium on the table as he heard his father's voice.

'How are things going, Walter? Are you finding your feet at school?'

'Yes, Daddy.'

'Well, speak up. I want to hear you.'

Walter's eyes flickered to his father's face, to his sunburned forehead, then returned to the red flowers. 'I'm all right,' he said as though to the geranium.

'You look healthy enough, at any rate.'

A waitress arrived to take the order for tea. Mr Blakiston, the father, was a farmer from the up-country hills; he did not feel at home in this city-restaurant where everything was tidy, laundered and shut-in. The jacket of his blue suit was too tight in the shoulders and the edge of his white collar chafed his brown neck. The waitress embarrassed him, standing with her pencil and little open pad for the tea-order. He looked round the geranium flowers at his son.

'What do you fancy, Walter? Buns? Cake? Scones?'

'Yes.'

The father glanced up at the waitress with one of his infrequent smiles. 'Very well—I see we'd better tackle the whole caboodle.'

The waitress departed. Walter's eyes followed her white cap across the room: she walked gracefully, very erect above her wide hips, her black hair pinned up behind in a knot. He was thinking of his mother, the one person he loved. His father had given him no news of his mother, and again he would not ask. He waited, blinking at the pattern of threads in the table-cloth, saying nothing.

In the long silence Mr Blakiston began restively blowing out his thin pale lips, stroking his forehead as though it hurt him.

'Too hot in this place,' he said at last, explosively, and jabbed at the catch of the window beside them. And now, with the window open and the curtains trembling in the draught, his attention fixed itself on the potted geranium before them. 'God save us, look at this confounded thing!' He sniffed the air with distaste. 'We might be sitting in a cemetery—too much smell of earth for my nostrils.' He lifted the plant on its saucer and dumped it squarely on the empty sill of the window, thus exposing the boy's face to him across the table. 'Don't you want to hear about your mother?' he asked suddenly and terribly.

'Yes. I wanted to. . . .'

'You don't seem very interested, I must say.'

Walter stopped short. He suspected now that his mother might be dead. Despite his love she might have died—she might be

already buried in the cemetery of the church below the hills, fifty miles away—his father might still be smelling the turned earth of the grave. He must speak.

'I didn't know what to ask,' he began again. 'If you didn't say anything. . . .'

Mr Blakiston sighed. Always, always, he had had this difficulty in getting into touch with his son; always this lack of contact. He found the boy secretive, exasperating, a heart closed against him. For this he blamed the boy's mother, bitterly and wrongly: the two of them had formed a league against him. He was a lonely man, harsh in his ways of love, and this division of his life had happened.

'You could have asked about your mother when I came to the school for you,' he said. 'After all, it wouldn't have been a very difficult question. You're not dumb, I imagine.'

'I didn't know—'

'All right, all right. Let's drop the subject.'

The tea arrived on a tray. The waitress, unloading the cups and the plates of food, glanced aside at the displaced geranium. She thought the boy had moved the plant and that his averted head and the flush on his cheeks meant that he was ashamed of himself.

'Don't you like flowers?' she asked with an air of amused offence. 'Don't you like a nice red flower on the table? Most people do who come here.'

Nobody answered the questions and after twisting round the teapot so that the handle was towards Mr Blakiston she walked away, flicking with a cloth at a fly or two above the tables down the room. A midsummer glare from the sun on the street outside made the room's ceiling pale, with a blue tinge of heat on the edges of the glass cake-shelves inside the door. A sound of bicycle bells and horses' hooves on asphalt rang distantly from the street. The air slept.

'Now Walter—' and Mr Blakiston grasped at the teapot '—since your mother's not with us I'd better do the honours.' He poured awkwardly, so that a trickle of tea splashed over into the saucers. 'Who pours your tea for you at school?'

'Sometimes the matron, sometimes we do it ourselves.'

'What else does the matron do?'

'She puts out our clean clothes on Sunday. And if we have a temperature she takes it.' He paused. 'She sorts the letters too.'

'Well, I hope she's teaching you to be more independent—to do more jobs for yourself.'

After a moment the boy said: 'I try.'

'You can't always have your mother at your elbow. That stands to reason, for all of us, sooner or later.'

Walter did not meet his father's eyes.

'What do you mean?' he asked presently.

'What I say. We've all got to learn to stand on our own feet. The younger the better. Here's your tea.'

From far away, a distance of the soul, Walter looked at the strong tea then turned his face aside and with a forefinger touched the flowers of the geranium on the window-sill. The petals had a plushy surface, rich and red as fresh blood. . . . If people placed flowers—any flowers—on a grave, so he had once been told, it was a mark of respect from the living to the dead. He stared at the flowers in his cold fear, trying to remember if he had ever seen his mother's blood, remembering that he had once helped her to plant lilies of the valley. She might not care for geraniums.

'Are you listening to me, Walter?' It was his father's voice across the table.

'Yes, Daddy.'

'Then leave that plant alone. And hold your head up. Don't you want to eat?'

Walter took one of the buttered scones. He did not want to eat. If he was sure that his mother was still alive then he could eat; not otherwise. He pushed a morsel of the scone into his mouth, chewing it thickly, trying to swallow, holding himself rigid against his father's gaze.

Mr Blakiston spoke again. 'Were you glad to see me when I came to the school?'

He had been glad, in a way. 'It was drill-afternoon, so I got off—'

'It wasn't possible to tell you beforehand or I'd have written to what's-his-name—the housemaster. I didn't know till last night that I'd have business in town here.'

Walter waited, swallowing.

'Why did you come?' he said at last.

'Why? Why not? You're my son, aren't you?—though by your present attitude anyone'd imagine I wanted to harm you.' Mr Blakiston paused, retreating once more behind the fences of his solitary self. This afternoon excursion with the boy had been a mistake, like so much else. 'I don't know, I'm damned if I know,' he said presently to his plate. 'Your mother and you, Walter . . . I've never got anywhere near either of you. It's a sad thing for a man when he feels shut off from others—he gives and he doesn't get.' He stopped, then pushed the plate of iced cakes towards Walter. 'Go on, eat—eat, for God's sake!'

'I don't want any more.'

'What are you frightened of?'

'Nothing.'

'All right then. I thought you were hungry.'

'I'm not now.'

Mr Blakiston went back to his own food in silence, his shoulders hunched forward, a slight sweat on his long upper lip. Presently, after a second cup of tea, he fetched a pipe and a rubber tobacco-pouch from his side-pocket. He held the pipe in his right hand, filling it slowly.

'You don't know, Walter,' he said in a low voice. 'It isn't the things he does that kill a man in the end, it's his thoughts. One day you'll understand all that.'

'Is Mummy angry with me? Why hasn't she written?'

'She hasn't been able to write.'

Again there was a silence. Mr Blakiston struck a match and lit the top of the tobacco in his pipe. The crude smoke was sweet on his tongue, a consolation, and at once he began to regret having said such things to his only son: they wouldn't bring him any nearer. And in his mind he sought for some action of recompense towards the boy, some attempt to get his love. Money seemed the easiest way out—a gift or offer of money. That might help matters, at least.

'Is there anything you want to buy?' he asked.

The boy did not understand, and hesitated. 'To buy?'

'Yes, to buy. I mean are you short of pocket-money?'

Without waiting for the answer Mr Blakiston unfolded a wallet on the table, among the cups and crumbs, and drew out a sovereign from one of the little flat pockets inside. He touched the milled edge of the coin with a thick thumb and forefinger, lingeringly. The sale-price of lambs had been low this summer: money was money.

'Here, take this.' He slid the gold sovereign across the cloth, bluntly. 'Regard it as a present from your mother, if it's she you're missing.'

Walter drew back against his chair. His father had never before given him so much money, and the pound could have only one explanation and purpose. Walter knew it. His mother was dead. The money was something offered in her place. His father was paying him a pound not to cry and never, ever, to look again for his mother alive.

'I don't want it.'

'Why not?'

The tears came, stifled, hot and confused, a disgrace to the afternoon and a public restaurant.

'I don't want it—I don't want it.'

Mr Blakiston got up abruptly. 'Very well. There's no more to be said.' With the stem of his pipe he beckoned across the room to the waitress. When she arrived he nodded down at the table.

'How much do I owe you? The boy's eaten very little, as you see.'

She worked out a sum in pencil, then lifted an eyebrow at the sobbing Walter. 'Something gone wrong?' Vaguely she looked back at Mr Blakiston. 'I suppose he's in some sort of pickle at school?'

'Possibly. He hasn't managed to tell me.' Mr Blakiston reached down and scraped up the sovereign from the table. 'Can you change this, for the bill?'

'If you'd call at the counter on your way out.'

'Thank you, I will.' Mr Blakiston turned to his son. 'I'll go ahead, Walter . . . Haven't you got a handkerchief?'

'No.'

'Well, take mine. Come along now, pull yourself together—a man doesn't cry for nothing. I'll wait for you by the street-door.'

For a minute the boy was left alone at the table, awkwardly holding the enormous white tobacco-smelling handkerchief. He was still crying—the more ashamed of his tears because he saw that the waitress was watching him intently across the room, her eyebrows lifted. The idea came to him that she might be angry because he and his father had forgotten to move the pot of geraniums back to the table where it belonged. He could see the flower-heads and the mass of dark leaves on the window-sill beside him, very close, the red and the green swimming together. He wiped his eyes with the stiff handkerchief and after a moment touched the leaves with a finger. There was something he must do. And carefully, respectfully even, as though the table were the flat top of some grave visited for the first time, he put down the handkerchief and lifted the plant and its pot back to the middle of the cloth, among the plates, where the waitress would see it and approve. He did not look at her again but presently picked up the handkerchief and his school cap and followed his father down the room to the door. In silence they went out together into the hot street.

Yes, that was how it had been and that was how it came back to him after the hard years. Yet his mother had not died, as the

boy had feared. It was his father, not long afterwards, who had died. The gun had fallen beside him but nobody was certain if the death had been the accident it seemed. Walter remembered his father very clearly and it was for his father—not for the boy—that these middle-aged and disturbing tears fell occasionally and in secret. It had taken him forty years to arrive at compassion for a man with whom, after all, he found he shared not a little in common.

Now he put aside the glass of whisky and got up from his desk. He would find his wife and tell her a little of this story about himself and his father. If she listened then perhaps things would be easier between them: she would see that he was uncertain of much, herself included. At any rate he would try to tell her.

CHARLES BRASCH

Ben Rudd

i

HIGH above the town
He lodged with wind and sun
In a hollow of the hill
Whose tussock arms fell
About him, streams ran by
Low-voiced night and day.

Narrow hut and black hearth
Crouching to earth,
Billy, bunk and crude
Bench, axe and spade,
Candle and shotgun—
And the flag of green
Outside by the brown wall,
Potato patch and full-
Fruited raspberry, gooseberry.

ii

No one crossed his door,
No one crossed his path
For fear
Of sudden threat or oath.

It was no hate he nursed
But fear of hate,
Dread of being forced
Into the common net,

Into the common life
Where none go free or content,
But only safe
To want what all want.

So to keep strangers at bay
Was all his care,
None came but to pry
(He thought) and interfere,

Strike at his liberty;
And so he ran
When words were thrown away
And seized his gun.

iii

'Up there on the mountain,' they said,
'Half crazed, not right in the head,
Dangerous too, pointing his gun
For no reason, at anyone
Passing, not stopping even—
That's what he's come to, living
Alone in the wind and the sun,
Old, and his wits gone;
It's not right,' they said,
'Alone there, muttering mad
Words, mad old Ben Rudd.'

iv

Start alone, end alone.

All known faces gone
And familiar talk done;
Heart that poised on a knife edge
Eased now of its stubborn rage,
Beyond fear and hope content
Not to ask, not to want,
Free to live its own days
Wasting no breath upon the ways
Of other men, but every thought
Bent to work the sum out
Of what is and what is not.

v

'Ben Rudd, mad Ben Rudd
Soft in the head
Thinks himself God!',
The town boys cried out
Running past his hut.
Angry looks, a black
Word flung in their wake,
Gun snatched up,
But they were gone sharp
Down among boulder and bush
Into the evening hush,
Swelling the rumour spread
Of mad Ben Rudd.

vi

It was no madman who gardened and farmed for a life-
time,
Gardening in the valley, climbing to farm the hill;
Who ploughed and sowed the unbroken waste
Of hillside, dividing fields, setting byre and barn;
Planted pine-belts, raised stone walls
To run like natural boundary marks
Between field and field on the rounded slopes,
Boulders, grey hill stones, an everlasting race
Out of forgotten time;

Walls that rise in their fields
Stone-grey, marking out
Place and time, separating
Field from field, life from life;
Vanishing over the flank of a hill,
Disappearing into the night
Or cloud, or winter snow;
Borne past years and lives
Across the hillside, round the curving globe
And onward into memory, into myth;
Carefully, lovingly raised, stone by chosen stone
Day after day, year on year,
A lifetime burden of stones,
A history traced out in stone walls.

vii

Moving higher at last
He left field and wall behind,
Looking down on them, looking beyond them
To town and harbour, and beyond the town
Green headlands, white beaches
And the sombre arc of ocean
Scarcely heard except on still nights after storm,
But always present, the oncoming night
Waiting, the end of time waiting,
Cold ocean, grave of waters
And world's burial ground.

viii

Few passed his door,
None crossed his mind.
At home to summer air
And railing wind
He lived out day and night
As though none but he
Trod earth's deck, beset
By sea and sky.

ix

The town clacked, mocked, forgot, was reminded.
An old man on the mountain,

He had no right there
Setting himself up against
Decent folk in houses.
It did no one any good to think of him,
Old men should not be alone
—It wasn't right for anybody
To live alone.
Why, left there
He might die alone
And nobody be any wiser.
And some might think the town neglected him.
Which would give it an ill name—
Like the bad names the old man gave
Any passer, or visitor
Who threw him a kind word, proffered a kindness.

But, live and let live,
No one was looking for trouble,
It wouldn't be wise to use force
Not unless it was needed.

Leave the old dog alone.

x

They found him when his strength failed.
Carried him down
Hardly protesting in the end.
And the town received him,
Nursed him barely a week
Until death shook
His leaf from the bough,
Out of then, into now.

FRANCIS WEST

My Generals Won't Fight

BRITISH historians of Germany since the second world war have scoffed as they wrote of the late enemy, giving free rein to their emotion when confronted with the figures of Hitler and his subordinates; an emotion justifiable enough in face of the horror of Nazi atrocities which have no counterpart in the British conception of total war. 'A vast system of Nordic nonsense', 'the froth of the Niebelungs'; such phrases, and adjectives like 'bestial', 'squalid', 'terrible', 'outrageous', 'malignant', pepper the account. H. R. Trevor-Roper, for example, punctuates his extremely well-written story of the last days of Hitler with them, and describing the Mad Hatter's tea party which was held in the afternoon of 20 July 1944, produces a brilliant and malicious portrait. His work, combining the irony of Gibbon with the sly, percipient, malice of Strachey, conveys the distaste and contempt which an Englishman must feel for the blood-thirstyness and irresponsibility over tea and cream-buns which the Nazis displayed. The apocalypse of the Valkyries, as the Fuehrer prepared to leave the world he had tried to ruin, would be scarcely credible were it not so reliably attested, and faced with this overwhelming evidence of the nightmare quality of Hitler's court, of the behaviour of the monkey house, Trevor-Roper is driven to ask two questions. How did such monkeys seize and retain power? How did they so nearly win the war? His answer to the first is, because of the nature of German politics and the character of dictatorial power. His answer to the second is, they did not: what nearly won the war was German industry and the Germany army; and what lost it was the unchecked development of the dictatorship. His explanation is one to which many German generals cling: what lost the war was Hitler's interference with their professional direction of it; and they share the attitude of contempt for his rages and intuitions and his dislike of what he called 'the damned objective attitudes' of the General Staff. We are in the presence of a new legend of 'the stab in the back', but it is a legend which is not unchallenged. The Nazi myth is that the Fuehrer was betrayed by the Generals some of whom had tried to kill him, and most of whom had, by their cowardice, incompetence, and antagonism, ruined his plans. At the moment of

his departure for the National Socialist Valhalla, Hitler could not resist a last malediction: 'In future may it be a point of honour with German Army officers, as it already is in our Navy, that the surrender of territory and towns is impossible, and that, above all else, commanders must set a shining example of faithful devotion to duty until death.' Why won't my generals fight? he asked, and receiving no answer, prescribed a remedy. 'One or two officers should be shot, then we would have a change.'

In England, in a similar moment of crisis, Churchill was telling Alanbrooke, 'I sometimes think my generals don't want to fight the Germans', and complaining about those 'many generals who are only too ready to surrender, and who should be made examples of like Admiral Byng' (an officer who was shot for cowardice). How ironical if, after all the abuse showered on Hitler, it were to appear that, making all allowances for the very considerable constitutional, moral, and intellectual differences, the political and military leadership of Britain was not in essence different from the German! Ironical, but not unexpected. Lord Beaverbrook has shown us the depressing quality of British leadership in the 1914-18 war, the squabbles of Lloyd George and his generals. It was the Dardanelles campaign and a similar squabble which led to Churchill's resignation during that war. Clemenceau once said that war was too serious to be left to the generals, and the generals, where they have been articulate, have replied that it is also too serious to be left to politicians. The surprising thing would be to find that this soldier-politician conflict did not occur, especially in the circumstances of what is called total war. For with Hitler and Churchill, however different the characters and the situations of the two men, we must also consider the nature of power, that unchecked and untrammelled power which German generals (and Trevor-Roper) blame for the loss of the war; that power which Churchill explains that he held, 'and which henceforth I wielded in ever-growing measure for five years and three months of world-war'. 'At last', he says, 'I had authority to give direction over the whole scene. I felt as if I were walking with destiny, and that all my past life had been but a preparation for this hour and for this trial.' We must always bear in mind Lord Acton's famous dictum about power.

Both Hitler and Churchill were prone to hear the wings of the Angel of History rustling at their elbows. Historical necessity and justice, or destiny, are strong weapons with which to confound doubting military leaders who hesitate to co-operate with strategic genius. Hitler, brooding on Clausewitz, his mind brutal in its

simplification of history and philosophy, took over the post of commander-in-chief of the German Army in 1941. 'This little affair of operational command is something that anybody can do', and in doing it, says his former Chief of Staff, his decisions 'ceased to have anything in common with the principles of strategy and operations as they had been recognized for generations past'. The German generals were face to face with the greatest general of all time who despised experts, resented logistics, and so ignored or brushed aside those expert military opinions which were offered to him. Had he not been right when the Generals were wrong at every crisis in Nazi history; the Rhineland, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Norway, France? Churchill, holding a not disproportionate measure of power, could be restrained or advised by institutions which he could not sweep away, but the process of advice or restraint was accompanied by scenes and sentiments not radically different. For Churchill, more widely read than Hitler, had brooded over history too, and was convinced that he had inherited the strategic genius of his ancestor Marlborough whose biographer and eulogist he was. Like Hitler, face to face with experts he was distrustful and frustrated, quick to see sloth and incompetence. He could have dismissed his experts, although he did not, but he would explode: 'those damned planners of yours plan nothing but difficulties'. Without this inspired leadership, the intuitions, the contempt for cold logic, neither the Germans nor the British would have scored their victories. The neglect of technical advance which the Prussian Army always exhibited, the conservative leadership of the British Army, both had ignored or suppressed their Guderians and their Fullers: both needed a Hitler or a Churchill to brush aside their professional caution; both, naturally, resisted unprofessional genius.

On 5 November 1939, von Brauchitsch, commander-in-chief of the German Army, went to see Hitler in the Chancellery, armed with the views of the General Staff on the impossibility of a campaign in the West. The war in Poland was over. The French had shown no disposition to attack Germany. All that was needed was for the Germans to stand on the defensive and the awful and perhaps fatal extension of the war could be avoided. As an unpolitical soldier Brauchitsch could not base his objections on such political grounds, so he made the most of technical arguments and difficulties: the weather was unsuitable, the ground bad, the spirit of the Army as shown in Poland not up to the standard of the first war. Hitler flew into a rage. He shouted abuse at Brauchitsch: the generals were cowardly and defeatists; they had tried to sabotage his plans; they did not want to fight; and he forbade Brauchitsch

to go on with his report. Eighteen days later the senior generals of the Army were summoned to receive a display of inspired leadership which was intended to remove these defeatist tendencies. 'My person is irreplaceable. Neither a military nor a civil person could replace me. . . . I am convinced of my powers of intellect and decision. . . . My decision is unchangeable. I shall attack. . . . I have to choose between victory and destruction. I choose victory . . . . I shall stand or fall in this struggle. No capitulation to the forces outside. No revolution from within.' The commander-in-chief attempted to resign, but after Hitler had once again rehearsed all his accusations against the sloth and reluctance of the General Staff he was told that he had to do his duty like any other soldier. He obeyed; and when the campaign was launched in May 1940 it was brilliantly successful. This very success made the next occasion of conflict more violent. Before the Russian campaign opened in June 1941 the same struggle was repeated. When the General Staff produced the figures of Russian tank production, Hitler, confirmed in his belief in the cowardice and incompetence of the Generals, ordered the section of the Staff which had compiled the figures to be suppressed. The Russian campaign was not successful. 'You have only to kick the door and the whole structure will collapse', said the Fuehrer; but it did not; and when the winter came the German Army, unequipped with winter clothing, was deep in Russia. For this too Brauchitsch was blamed. 'If Brauchitsch had remained at his post, even if only for another few weeks, the matter would have ended in catastrophe. He's no soldier; he's but a poor thing, a man of straw.'

On 3 October 1941, a special messenger arrived at the headquarters of the commander-in-chief Home Forces in London with an order to carry out an examination for an attack on Trondheim in northern Norway and to prepare a plan of attack; an operation which in more favourable circumstances the German General Staff had flatly refused to have anything to do with. Alanbrooke and the Chiefs of Staff were summoned to Downing Street nine days later where it seemed they were 'in for the hell of a storm'. 'I had instructed you', said Churchill, 'to prepare a detailed plan for the capture of Trondheim. . . . What have you done? You have submitted a masterly treatise on all the difficulties and on all the reasons why this operation should not be carried out.' To objections based on the weather and lack of air support he answered, 'You state that it would take you twenty-four hours to cover the ground between A and B. How can you account for so long being taken? Explain to me exactly how every one of those twenty-four

hours will be occupied.' The plan was temporarily abandoned when Alanbrooke waived all his objections and said that he would undertake the operation if Admiral Sir Dudley Pound would send the Fleet into Trondheim Fjord in support. Pound, who had been dozing, sat up and shook his head. Churchill, who respected Pound's judgement, thereupon let the matter drop; for the time being. It remained a phantom to haunt the Chiefs of Staff in gloomier moments, for no other discoverable reason than Churchill's desire to roll up the map of Europe beginning where Hitler had begun. Individual points were won, but Alanbrooke had continually to struggle against Churchill's inspiration. 'I tried to begin to make him realize that we must have one definite policy for the conduct of the war.' 'We were told that we did nothing but obstruct his intentions, we had no ideas of our own and, whenever he produced ideas we produced nothing but objections.' The way of the political leader is indeed hard.

Neither so vulgar nor so bloodthirsty as Hitler, Churchill's feelings came from the same frustration. For at root their situation was the same. Both were continually being warned by their military advisers against the over-extension, or dissipation, or piecemeal commitment of limited resources. The German General Staff believed that Germany's resources were not adequate to win the war and on these grounds resisted, so far as they were able, the war itself and every individual extension of it. The British Chiefs of Staff had continually to argue the same case: that a strategy must be devised within the limits of available resources and that side-issues, like Northern Norway or Greece, should be avoided. The generals on both sides were not gamblers: they liked campaigns and battles of which the results and the limits could be seen. With the exception of Greece, the British generals prevailed. The Germans did not; and the evidence of their failure is Stalingrad and the Ardennes offensive in 1944, for which latter attack the Army commander received the operational plan down to unit details marked in the Fuehrer's own hand, 'Not to be altered'. Stalingrad was defended, against the best military advice, to the bitter end, for no other reason than the significance its name possessed for Hitler. 'For the Bolsheviks it would be an evil omen to lose Stalingrad'; and for this matter of prestige a whole Army was sacrificed. 'The Sixth Army will do its historic duty at Stalingrad to the last man.'

Prestige is a value which does not normally figure in the training of a General Staff officer who is concerned with the rational calculations of logistics, but a politician, especially when he is a

great war-lord, is vulnerable. Singapore possessed for the British a similar prestige to Stalingrad. Having lost command of the sea without which the base was useless, and never having had command of the air, Churchill proposed to reinforce the base against his Chiefs of Staff's opinion in December 1941. The reinforcements arrived in time to go into a Japanese prison camp, while Churchill drafted a telegram about the necessity of staffs and commanders perishing at their posts. Singapore, like Stalingrad, rankled; and it had a sequel. In August 1943 Churchill conceived an affection for an attack on the northern tip of Sumatra which he had discovered, by using dividers on a map, to be within bombing range of Singapore. To the argument that Sumatra was not a possible base for future action, that there was no next step, he replied, 'I do not want any of your long term projects, they cripple initiative', and to further objections, 'I don't want to know'. Sumatra, like northern Norway, lingered behind the Chiefs of Staff.

Such intuitive or irrational leadership was in the end catastrophic for the Germans, and at times humiliating for the British, but it led the Germans very close to victory even in Russia, and it finally achieved victory for the British. It drove the generals to fight, to attack, in both victory and defeat, and when they are honest they will admit its quality and its inspirational value. We laugh at the military short-comings of these political leaders because this is history as the generals tell it. Hitler is not here to answer them, and Churchill has not yet done so. The generals tend to be military snobs, thinking that war is a mystery closed to laymen, regarding ignorance of logistics as decisive, forgetting the great Moltke's remark that generalship 'did not go beyond the simplest premises of ordinary common sense'. The politicians tend to forget the logic of planning, but the generals make the more serious error of regarding war as a military affair. It ceased to be so in 1871.

DESMOND MAHONEY

Musical Criticism

ARTISTIC growth in a young country brings adjustment to changing standards in its train as one of the penalties to set against progress. When the country is also at the end of the world, many problems arise which never trouble older, more closely-settled areas.

Here in New Zealand one of the by-products of our isolation has been a retarded musical growth, with a sudden and mighty flowering over the past decade, a flowering in quality rather than in quantity, for in the days before radio there was much more music of a kind. So sudden a rise in quality has caused a considerable amount of confusion, for a large part of the public—even the musical public—is well behind the times in its assessment of the value of our best performances. The feeling is still abroad, though gradually being dispelled, that if the musician is a native New Zealander, he is necessarily inferior.

Some of the blame lies at the door of music criticism itself, for it is a craft still very much in its infancy here and operating under peculiarly limiting conditions, confined almost entirely to the daily newspapers. Most newspaper editors still look upon criticism of any kind as an inconvenient chore, to be disposed of in as short a space and with as little trouble as possible. Usually the music critics are professional musicians, supplying their notices at agreed rates and nothing further. Sometimes they are journalists, usually with a degree of practical musical training, who are able also to contribute articles to their papers on musical subjects. Whatever the arrangement, criticism of an expanded nature is seldom possible.

We must ask ourselves two questions: What do we expect from the critics, and are we expecting the right things?

But before looking closely at our particular problems, it might be as well to consider why a music critic should wish to spend his days writing short articles on a subject which can never be adequately described in words, warming hard seats on the aisle, more often disappointed than elated by what he hears; why, above all, he should imagine that he is particularly qualified to distribute praise and blame.

The music critic and his colleague the art critic are odd birds, for they seek to capture in words the essences of arts which lie in different worlds. They have at the outset a more difficult task than the literary critic or the drama critic, who deal in words and with words. The music critic is generally a man of musical feeling who finds his best method of expression not in composing or playing an instrument, but in writing about music and its performance.

His first love must be music, his second his typewriter, and despite his impassive appearance, he must be a thorough-going idealist. Only the hope of something better inside the door of the next concert hall could possibly sustain him through the dreadful present which is often his lot. The critic should have some musical training, both practical and theoretical, and a considerable listening experience behind him before he ventures on criticism at all; he must have a very clear idea in his own mind of what is good in composition and performance, what is promising and what is worthless.

Note the phrase 'in his own mind', for criticism of any value must be subjective.

There is a school of thought which would have criticism restricted to plain description of the works performed. The end of this line of thought was reached in Nazi Germany, when Goebbels decreed in 1936 that there was to be no more criticism, only description. No one has repeated the experiment.

Another school admits criticism of the performance, but not of works by established composers. Not long ago an extremely valued and erudite friend reproached me courteously for having referred slightingly to certain works of Mendelssohn; to him this composer was above criticism—only the performance should have been criticized. The obvious reply, of course, is that even the greatest and most consistent composers—Bach, Beethoven, Mozart—wrote some works which were not comparable with their best; the critic has a duty to point this out.

Finally there is this peculiar idea of objective criticism, so often bandied about, despite the fact that the word is a contradiction when aplied to criticism. Completely objective writing about music would be not only uninteresting and unreadable, but also impossible. So many exterior factors affect the critic's views—education, environment, known prejudices and subconscious attitudes—that they must be subjective if the point is faced honestly.

A music critic who endeavours to present an entirely objective view of a work or a performer is not a critic at all; he is on the

territory of the musicologist, who seeks to explain the meaning of what he has heard in technical terms, or the reporter, concerned with a bald account of its presentation. Since honest criticism is necessarily an expression of opinion and quite subjective, a notice should be regarded as a starting-point for discussion, not an *ex cathedra* pronouncement. I believe that far too many people look upon it in the latter light, some critics as well as their readers.

All the practical experience, all the theoretical training in the world will not make a critic unless he has the gift of instinctive judgement. This is the basis of the critical faculty, and most great critics have made no bones about admitting that they rely on instinct first and knowledge and experience afterwards. As instrumentalists or singers many are no more than furtive back-room pianists, and some (G. B. Shaw is the most famous example) have got by on sheer instinct, effrontery and literary ability, though their musical pronouncements themselves may sometimes have been appalling.

Eric Blom, a mature and tolerant critic, editor of the new *Grove*, said in a recent article: 'The critic must exercise such purely personal gifts as technical knowledge, historical sense and taste in order to decide whether what is done skilfully amounts to true greatness . . . the task is not easy. True greatness may be felt instinctively, but it is often hard to account for in words.'

Approaching the same point from a different angle, a great literary critic, the late Sir Desmond MacCarthy, advised a young colleague: 'Always listen to the still, small voice that whispers "Fiddlesticks!" '

For two further sidelights, or rather, illuminating beacons, on the subject of criticism we must turn to Samuel Johnson. 'There are three distinct kinds of judges upon all new authors and productions', said Johnson. 'The first are those that know no rules but pronounce entirely from their natural tastes and feelings; the second are those that know and judge by the rules; and the third are those who know but are above the rules. These last are those you should wish to satisfy. Next to them rate the natural judges; but ever despise those opinions that are formed by the rules.'

And the demand that the critic should be able himself to do whatever he criticizes when others do it was met thus by Johnson: 'Why no, Sir; this is not just reasoning. You may abuse a tragedy, though you cannot write one. You may scold a carpenter who has made you a bad table, though you cannot make a table. It is not your trade to make tables.'

The ideal critic, one might say, is an individualist, a musician

born, sure of his own standards, anxious to bring others to a realization of them, and, it must be added, with a type of missionary zeal whose objective is the general advancement of music.

Now let us return to those two questions affecting relations between musicians, critics and the public in New Zealand.

An example of informed opinion about our critics was given in one of the bulletins issued by the Federation of Chamber Music Societies, of which the following is a section: 'Essentially the opinions are the music critics' own, and as such of little value unless the latter are able to speak with much greater authority, based on knowledge and experience, than most of our critics are in a position to do. We know this is a touchy subject, and we hasten to add that we speak in most general terms, and there are some critics who really know what they are talking about. But by and large we feel that our critics have been outwitted by the rapid improvement of our musical standards in recent years, and their limited fount of knowledge is no longer commensurate with the importance of the events upon which they are called to pass judgement.'

Here we come up against the central problem of criticism in New Zealand, that of standards. At the risk of a deluge of objections, I must say that we are still tethered to a double standard, despite the advances made in recent years, and that we shall have to observe the double standard for some time to come.

One of the principal functions of a critic is to set up a local yardstick, a standard of judgment which may not be correct in all eyes but is at least consistent. If a concert-goer has familiarized himself with his local critic's likes and dislikes, and compared them with his own, then he should know where he himself will stand in relation to a given performer or performance.

It is in the shadowy border country of professionalism and amateurism, overseas and New Zealand performance, that standards become confused. If a critic were to base all his notices on the performances of first-class recitalists or London orchestras, then the locals would usually (not always) find themselves given a poor hearing. What the critic must do in assessing a local performance is to imply beyond question which standard he is using, even state it outright, building up the impression that it is desirable to be judged severely by overseas standards rather than indulgently by local ones.

This view will doubtless raise an outraged cry from the purists. 'What a suggestion!' I can hear them saying. 'How can we improve our standards by patting every passable local production

on the head and saying it is quite good?' But the purists forget that this is still a very small country, with a limited amount of musical talent. If the highest standards are applied throughout (and this has been tried) it does not take long to discourage local effort by severe notices. The general public will not be greatly affected one way or the other by an adverse notice, but the performer, especially if his is a real gift, will often take a bad notice more to heart than warranted.

We have a handful of musicians and ensembles of good quality by world standards here in New Zealand. Beyond these are the mixed professional and amateur groups and the outright amateurs, who are often comparable with the general run of performers overseas, though naturally not with the best professionals. What is to be the critic's approach to these music-makers, most of whom have something of value to contribute?

He may damn them all indiscriminately, in the manner of one highly unpopular Australian critic. The constructive approach is to draw attention to good points as well as weaknesses, always with the emphasis on taste and musicianship. With the encouragement of the best of the local effort should go a readiness to attack visiting musicians whose work is less than first-class, for whatever reason. Local performers will then smart less under criticism, and listeners will perhaps be more critical of visitors than they tend to be.

We are still greatly dependent on overseas experience as a means of establishing and refreshing our own standards. Most New Zealand-born critics writing at present have visited Europe, America or at least Australia, some of them all three. The mere fact of their having made comparisons, heard fine music at first-hand, and reinforced their instinctive judgements is invaluable. Two factors make this overseas experience particularly desirable, though a critic can write well and perceptively without it.

No matter how certain he may feel of his own standards and instinct, he is always at a disadvantage when working from recordings, with the consequent allowances which must be made in order to arrive at an approximation to a concert performance by the same orchestra. Though we have heard many good soloists here, the critic is forced back on his instinct when dealing with orchestral music, opera and ballet, unless he has been abroad. The second disadvantage is that he cannot help hearing some probably unintentional denigration of home-produced music by the considerable number of European immigrants over the past twenty years who have brought nostalgic memories with them.

A year overseas, from my own experience, disposes of these difficulties at one blow. The critic is able to measure his own opinions and values against actual performances and the opinions of critics whom he has previously venerated from afar (and what feet of clay they sometimes reveal!).

He finds that things can go dreadfully wrong in the best places, that Covent Garden, Stuttgart Opera or the Opéra Comique are just as capable of turning on rank bad performances as Auckland or Wellington, though not so frequently. He discovers, as he always suspected, that even the greatest orchestras play below recording standard in public concerts, those rare magical moments of the concert hall apart, and that while there is much magnificent music, there is also much indifferent music.

Keeping those acquired standards fresh is the critic's next problem. Literally at the end of the world, he cannot expect to visit Europe more than two or three times in his working life, and is lucky if he can do so once. But he should be able to go to Australia more frequently, and occasionally at least to the western seaboard of the United States. So far, unfortunately, newspapers have not looked upon it as being in the slightest degree necessary for their critics to travel at all, certainly not at their papers' expense.

New works are a hurdle for the critic to clear, though not as formidable a hurdle here as elsewhere. Music critics of sixty years ago had a solid, seemingly permanent frame of reference. One had only to know the rules and use one's instinct; the rest was dependent on the individual's capacity to express himself. But now the critic must have one set of references for music before 1900, and another, much more vague if existent at all, for that written in the multitude of later idioms.

It is a fact that the general musical public—what Ernest Newman calls the Plain Musical Man—is still working on the standards of 1900. And so, let it be said, are most critics. They are in a difficult position because those who attacked new music in the past were so often proved wrong by later changes in public taste. Critics are still human enough to dislike being caught out, with the result that many go to extremes in acclaiming novelty for the sake of novelty. Others sit on the fence, a course which drives them into musicology; the function of the critic is passed by.

There is not a critic writing, I suppose, who has not temporized on this point at some time or another, because a work has, at one hearing, been beyond his range of experience, or alien to his outlook. Hence the strong demand that a critic should have seen the score of a new work before hearing it, and the counter-argument

that for a snap judgement he comes to a work with a less clouded mind if he has not seen the score. There is a case for delayed criticism, instead of the hurried next-day notices into which daily newspaper critics are forced.

The predicament of the critic dealing with new music was discussed at length by Henry Raynor in a B.B.C. Third Programme talk last April. He believes that critical attempts to justify an objective view lead to unfortunate results, and that the subjective view should always be accepted as the normal view.

'To me', says Mr Raynor, 'the critic's function is to make qualitative aesthetic judgements that are founded, not on any given law or doctrine, but on the basis of such understanding of the works he encounters as his innate sensitivity and his training give him. The only (present) movement in music criticism is a shuffling retreat from qualitative judgement into either unenthusiastic tolerance or musicological scholarship.'

Mr Raynor's view of the critic is this: 'We do not look upon him as one who has tutorial authority over us, but as a trained observer whose observations of a work are likely to be shrewd, educated and sensitive. It is as valuable to disagree as to agree with the view of the good critic, and our situation is highly critical when, for whatever reason, critics decide that their opinions are things they had better keep to themselves.'

If that is the situation in Great Britain, and I believe to an even greater extent in the United States (Europeans have long been famous for their musicological leanings), it is small wonder that the New Zealand critic frequently takes up an ambiguous position in relation to new music.

Criticism of the new music produced here is closely tied up with the critic's delicate position in a small community. It hinges on the fact that the quantity of music being performed or written in New Zealand is insufficient to justify employment of a full-time critic by any newspaper. If its notices are written by a professional musician outside the staff, he cannot be expected to spend the time, or have the training, to undertake straight reporting of musical developments, interviews with visiting musicians, and so on. This field is then left to the reporting staff of the paper, sometimes with disastrous results, or else is entirely ignored.

Where a journalist is also the newspaper's critic, he must collect information about music from a number of composers and executants whom he may subsequently feel compelled to criticize strongly; he must also interview visiting musicians whose playing may later offend him. The two branches, reporting and criticizing,

should be divorced, but at our present stage of development it appears impracticable, unless newspapers change their outlook radically.

Ideally a critic should be aloof from the musical life of his community, treading a rather lonely path, for human nature being as it is, close friendship with musicians often leads to a sense of obligation. If the critic is a professional musician, pressure on him is likely to be even heavier than if he is a member of a newspaper staff. There is also the not unknown factor of proprietorial pressure in favour of the sons or daughters of personal friends—a factor which now, fortunately, is seldom encountered in the main cities.

In larger communities, with a reservoir of potential first-class musicians exceeding the demand, and with the critic employed solely as a critic, these considerations do not enter into the reckoning, and he can be as ruthless as his temperament and the attitude of his country towards libel permit. Nor are larger communities as thin-skinned as ours, where uncertainty as to standards leads to undue resentment against adverse criticism.

The final major problem of the critic in New Zealand is lack of space for detailed and expanded criticism. Only one large newspaper, to my knowledge, allows its critic to devote a whole column to a notice if he feels disposed to do so; the remainder allow from six inches to sixteen. I do not suggest that they should allow more, for daily newspaper criticism, to be read and appreciated, must be brief and interesting.

But there is no monthly journal devoted to music, not even a quarterly, and until the deficiency is made good, music criticism in this country will be seriously hampered. Often a point worth expanding has either to be dropped altogether or passed over lightly, purely through lack of space.

A consequence of this is the reluctance of people to challenge the critic publicly, and here, I believe, lies the direction in which our criticism could be made more lively, accurate and to the point. Although I have been writing notices for daily papers for the past nine seasons, many of them severely critical, I could count on my fingers the number of times I have been directly questioned or taken to task for my views. Perhaps the musical public thinks it a breach of manners to question a critic, perhaps it is not considered worth-while, perhaps there is fear of a rebuff. So the critic works in a vacuum. He knows that there must be disagreement with a great deal of what he says, but no one is prepared to make an issue of anything, start a controversy, and spark off an exchange of ideas which could be of great benefit.

So we return to our two questions: What do we expect from the critics, and are we expecting the right things?

The answers appear to be that many people who read the notices expect infallible judgements and are distressed when they find opinions, that they expect the critic to be a formidable musicologist, and that too many look for a treatise when (to answer the second question) they should be expecting Henry Raynor's 'shrewd, educated and sensitive observations'.

If performers and listeners alike could be persuaded to drop their diffidence, if more newspapers (there are two honourable exceptions) were prepared to devote further space to the subject, and a musical journal came on the scene, we should be getting somewhere. But while most newspapers shy from strong criticism, because they fear indignant protests, there is not much hope of the public being stirred. Whatever course criticism takes here in the future, let us be sure that it is subjective and alive; an honest opinion is worth a page of flowery programme-notes.

JOHN DUNMORE

A Plea for the Playwright

WE HAVE become accustomed in recent years to the principle of state help for the arts. The nameless many-headed taxpayer now replaces the patron of old; the state acts as intermediary, providing grants and bursaries, a Literary Fund and a National Orchestra.

With the current growth of interest in the theatre, a demand has arisen for assistance in this quarter too, and not entirely without timidity grants have been made to actors and producers, both individually and as groups. The time is probably not far distant when a move may be made to assist the playwright. The danger is that help of some kind may be given without enquiring what the authors really need.

At present, the writer of plays is faced with two alternatives, if we except the Broadcasting Service. He can attach himself to an amateur society or he can enter for a playwriting competition.

The first presents difficulties inherent in any form of directed or tied production. The writer is limited to the resources of his own district. He must bear in mind the actors who are available to the society, as well as the theatre in which the play will be presented and the tastes of the local audience. Working in a restricted circle may not only lead to parochialism, but it may also soften the resistance that would be met by a second-rate play—and, let us say at once, although a playwright needs to have his plays produced, it does him more harm than good to have a play accepted that would be far better buried in a drawer and forgotten or, at least, rewritten.

Competitions are another outlet and probably the most dangerous. Indeed the possibility that state assistance to playwriting competitions may be officially offered in the near future is a very real one. The Auckland Festival is already preparing to sponsor a competition for playwrights that might become an annual event—rather like fathers' race at the school sports.

The weakness of competitions lies in the theory that by a certain time a limited number of plays of sufficient merit will come forward to fill the first few places. In practice there may be a dozen good plays—or there may be none. The tendency to judge all things on a first-past-the-post principle becomes palpably absurd when applied to the arts. What is possible at the Olympic Games is not necessarily possible at the Auckland Festival or at any other festival, and anyone who wishes to award the first prize in a contest entered by, say, Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams or by Chekhov and Ibsen is welcome to do so, if he has time to waste.

Harm may also be done if the authors endeavour to anticipate the desires or hopes of the judging committee. There is, for instance, the constant call for a 'New Zealand' play, just as there is one for a 'New Zealand' novel, but the real need is for writers who, left alone, will in time produce the books and plays that reflect our thoughts and our life. Attempts to force this development may be most harmful to our literature. Festival competitions might accentuate the pressure.

Last year's Southland play competition is, to a limited extent, a case in point. The winning play was keyed to the spirit of the centennial celebrations and, whatever its merits, it did meet the implied demand for a 'Centennial Play'. But whether Festival plays are good for drama in general is questionable.

Competitions, either local or national, are not what playwrights require to develop their style. The paramount need, of course, is for an audience, whose response is the very breath of life to the

play. An unperformed play may be a contribution to literature, but it is not yet a play. And if, in the course of production, a play comes to life before its author's eyes, then he will be able to learn and to improve his technique, just as a wise father can learn from the lips of his children.

There is, as yet, in this country, no intermediary through which a local playwright can submit his work to an amateur group. The reverse is also true: there is no regular way in which a society, anxious to present an unperformed play by a local author, can get in touch with writers. An Exchange Bureau of this type could do a great deal towards a New Zealand theatre. Existing groups such as the British Drama League, the Drama Council or the imminent Playwrights' Society could best perform this function.

The procedure would be for a play to be sent to the appropriate committee and, after consideration, to be cyclostyled and retained in a Reading Library. Interested societies, notified by a periodical bulletin, could hire reading copies for the usual fee thus helping to defray the cost of the scheme, and they could eventually approach the author through the committee. Plays which did not, in the estimation of the committee, warrant inclusion in the Library would be returned with a criticism and possibly with suggestions for revision.

The aim should be to assist the writing and performance of plays, not with a particular purpose in mind, but as part of a wider move to encourage the arts. Does this require the help of the state? If so, what form should its help take?

If the New Zealand theatre is to keep pace with developments in other artistic spheres some assistance is necessary, but the need is far smaller than has been claimed, because it is cheaper to present a play for six nights than to send an actor or a ballet student abroad for twelve months. The nearest parallel to what is required is the State Literary Fund, which enables books to be published that would not see the light of day if the normal rules of the publishing trade were applied.

Let us note in passing that the state does not set out to assist writers by holding competitions for the best novel or the best book of reminiscences, although it does help to finance, for example, the Jessie Mackay and Hubert Church Awards, which are made each year to outstanding works already published. The point is that the state helps to reduce the economic obstacles to publication, and that, in exactly the same manner, it could underwrite, or guarantee against loss (with a reasonable limit on production costs), amateur—or even professional—companies which are pre-

pared to undertake the production of a local play. There would be technical difficulties about this, but it would meet the common objection that audiences tend to mistrust the locally-written product and that, in consequence, the whole enterprise is financially risky.

The scheme would not be expensive since there are few New Zealand playwrights; one might hope that in the course of time it would become less expensive, as New Zealanders came to accept the work of their own writers. It would certainly counteract the apparently general impression that playwrights are actuated by an inexplicable desire to take part in a contest and that they must be humoured by frequent competitions.

Commentaries

T. INGLIS MOORE

Australian Letter

HERE in Australia literary magazines burst into blossom as bravely as the flowering of the prunus trees in this Canberra spring, only to vanish almost as quickly. Yet hope springs eternally in the literary breast, and a new magazine, *Australian Letters*, edited by Bryn Davies, Geoffrey Dutton, and Max Harris, made its first appearance in Adelaide in June.

It even cocks a snook at fate by publishing an article by John Tregenza on 'Australian Literary Magazines of the Last Three Decades', since this points out the high mortality rate of such publications. Thus eight of the 'little magazines' in the period discussed only lasted for one number, nine managed three or four numbers, and seven of them between five and ten. *Manuscripts* proved a slightly better stayer with thirteen numbers between 1931 and 1935. Only two magazines have lasted the course from earlier times and are still running, *Southerly* and *Meanjin*, which began

in 1939 and 1940. Neither depends, however, on subscriptions and sales alone, since *Southerly* is the magazine of the Sydney Branch of the English Association and is aided by the leading publishing firm, whilst *Meanjin* receives support from the University of Melbourne. Both get an annual subsidy of £600 from the Commonwealth Literary Fund.

Australian Letters has made a good start with an interesting first number. True, the verse is rather f.a.q., there are no short stories, and it is doubtful whether it was worth including replies to a questionnaire arising out of some derogatory remarks on some Australian writing by unimportant and ill-informed English critics. On the other hand, Tregenza's article is informative, there is a good 'profile' of that doughty Territorian Bill Harney, some penetrating points are made in critical reviews of the last *Coast to Coast* and *Australian Poetry* by Bryn Davies and Max Harris, and informed comment is made on recordings of Australian poetry and the qualities of local wine. The plan of presenting a bibliography of current publications, with critical comments, is a sound and useful one, even if the start made in this number is tentative and uncertain, the lists being incomplete and occasionally inaccurate.

The best item in the new magazine, however, is the provocative article by Geoffrey Dutton on 'Australian Poetic Diction'. This attacks the 'rhetoric' of Brennan and O'Dowd and the diction of McCrae and Neilson in a sweeping fashion, and then assaults even more roundly 'the dangerous revival of poetical diction led by A. D. Hope, James McAuley, and Harold Stewart', whose language 'sounds like a lecture in an empty museum . . . At least our poetic diction used to be abreast of the generation, or a comfortable fifty years behind, but with Hope, McAuley, and Stewart it turns tail for two or three hundred years.' The most important advance in our poetic diction, Geoffrey Dutton claims, has been 'the revival of the great mixed tradition of English poetic diction . . . the great tradition in which Slessor, Fitzgerald [why do our critics persist in spelling FitzGerald's name wrongly?], Douglas Stewart, Judith Wright, and David Campbell have worked, and it is a tradition peculiarly suited to the Australian environment.' This Dutton article indicates clearly the sympathies and antipathies held by the new magazine, together with its alignment in our literary groups.

That some of the Dutton strictures aimed specifically at A. D. Hope miss the mark may be seen by a vigorous poem by Professor Hope in the last number of *Quadrant*, a poem in which the language is simple, without any neo-classical poetic diction, and the

feeling comes with disciplined clarity. *Quadrant*, edited by James McAuley, has now reached the third number of its first volume. Entitling itself 'An Australian Quarterly Review', it is sponsored by the Australian Association for Cultural Freedom, which is affiliated to the international body, the Congress for Cultural Freedom, with headquarters in Paris. It is thus the Australian parallel to the English magazine *Encounter*, which has the same affiliation. Unlike *Australian Letters*, which is non-political, *Quadrant* stands on the political Right just as two other magazines, *Meanjin* and *Overland*, stand well on the political Left, whilst *Southerly* remains purely literary in its contents and outlook. *Quadrant* is not only anti-Communist, publishing articles criticizing the totalitarian suppression of individual freedoms under Communism, but also is coloured, naturally enough, by the social and religious convictions of its editor, who became a convert to Roman Catholicism. Just as *Southerly* took on the impress of R. G. Howarth and *Meanjin* of Clem Christesen, so it looks as if *Quadrant*, despite a covey of editorial advisors, will bear the McAuley imprint. Whatever else it may be, a magazine must inevitably be the creation of its editor—or editors—and a personal embodiment of the editorial mind.

The last number of *Quadrant* indicates the breadth of its coverage—articles on journalism in Canberra, education for an atomic age (by Professor Titterton), native ritual and tradition of the Motu people in Papua, a criticism of Hindemith's acceptance of Saint Augustine's teachings on music by Kenneth Hince, the conditioning of modern man by totalitarian régimes and by depersonalizing industry, reminiscences of C. J. Brennan by Professor Chisholm, an entertaining discussion of 'Youse and Non-Youse' by Bernard Hesling, a short story by E. O. Schlunke, poems, and reviews. *Quadrant*, like *Meanjin*, thus casts a wide net, and its expert fishermen bring up catches to suit various tastes.

Whilst Clem Christesen is travelling abroad this year, *Meanjin* is being edited by Geoffrey Serle, of the Melbourne University History department, aided by a group of associate editors. He is maintaining the high standard built up over many years by the driving force and single-minded enthusiasm of Christesen.

Many of us wondered what changes would happen to *Southerly* when R. G. Howarth went off to Capetown as Professor of English there and he was succeeded as editor by Kenneth Slessor, since Howarth was an academic scholar and critic whilst Slessor, apart from being a leading poet, has spent his time in the hurly-burly of Sydney journalism. So far, in the two numbers of the

magazine this year, there has been no revolutionary change. Critical articles have discussed the novels of Kylie Tennant, the life and work of Henry Lawson, and 'an overlooked novel' published first in 1866, the *Fifty Years Ago* of Charles De Boos. There has been, however, a slightly more adventurous touch with a short story by the experimentalist Hal Porter and a translation of a Jewish writer's Australian story, together with six poems by a new poet, Thomas W. Shapcott—a discovery that is not impressive. A lighter tone, too, comes in an entertaining sketch of wine-drinkers by that genial writer on wine Walter James. Slessor himself, who has written hardly any poetry for years, also returns to print with a bitter little satire on General Blamey.

Overland continues to flourish, stressing the leftist line explicitly or unobtrusively and proclaiming, in an editorial in its autumn number, that it will maintain and expand traditional values of Australian literature, defined as 'being democratic in temper, human in approach, national in spirit, plebian in orientation, and above all, faithful to the realities of Australian life'. The same editorial attacks *Quadrant* and McAuley's introductory editorial as 'explicitly reactionary'.

The conflict between the literary magazines is a healthy sign of the vitality and variety now perceptible in the Australian literary scene. It also denotes, along with several recent critical books, the trend towards certain literary groupings, especially in regard to literary nationalism. The main group, which includes FitzGerald, Slessor, Douglas Stewart, Judith Wright, and David Campbell—all poets—accepts its Australian environment naturally and maturely, without any self-conscious nationalism, and writes individually. In his recent book *Essays in Poetry, Mainly Australian*, Vincent Buckley, who belongs to the Hope-McAuley group, attacks what he terms 'a new *Bulletin* school' of poets, but in his review of Buckley's book on the *Bulletin* Red Page Douglas Stewart answered this charge effectively and temperately—for Stewart remains our best balanced critic and the *Bulletin* still attracts most of the best poetry and short stories written here. The second group is strongly nationalist, and its attitude is reflected not only in *Overland* but also in two critical works, Cyril Brown's *Writing for Australia: A Nationalist Tradition in Australian Literature* and the revised reprint of John K. Ewers's survey *Creative Writing in Australia*. The third group may be called the Hope-McAuley one, which is intellectualist, conservative, and anti-nationalist, with a leaning towards the age of Pope in its use of satire and neo-classical diction.

15in. x 22in.

JULIET PETER. Aitken Street, Wellington
Line Chalk and Wash 1956

42⅛in. x 47⅛in.

W. A. SUTTON. Church at Kirwee *Oil 1956*

19in. x 23in

ROY COWAN. Town Square *Lithograph 1956*

15in. x 20in.

JULIET PETER. St Pauls, Wellington *Lithograph 1956*

FREDERICK PAGE

The Consul

THE New Zealand Opera Company gave Menotti's *The Consul* in Wellington in August. This was the company's first production of a three-act opera, and its first production in a proper opera theatre. The occasion posed some problems; the company has given, successfully, three of the shorter Menotti operas, *The Telephone, The Medium, Amahl and the Night Visitors;* was it to go to the Concert Chamber with Vaughan-Williams's *Riders to the Sea,* Lennox Berkeley's *Dinner Engagement,* and work along those lines in that fairly extensive field, or was it to take the Grand Opera House, and if it could rise to *The Consul,* go on to the repertory works that find a place at Sadler's Wells, *Cav.,* and *Pag., Madame Butterfly, Faust,* or, lest you shudder, *Figaro, Fidelio, Peter Grimes?* Were Mr Robertson staying on we would be nearer an answer. With him the company has got away to a good start; brisk and efficient, he has a flair for handling forces, for coping with detail, and getting all together on the night. He has combed the country for singers, put work in front of them, persuaded them to sing. The success of the company so far has been in large part due to him.

The decision to storm the Opera House with *The Consul* was a bold one. The New Zealand Players lent a hand; Mr Campion produced, Mr and Mrs de Bethel designed. But this production lacked the unity of the others given by the company. The Sorels' flat was on the wrong scale, the Consul's ante-room had a dilapidated Ruritanian air, Magda Sorel, wife of a working-man on the run, whose child is to die of hunger and cold, looked, with her pretty hair-do and neat costume, as though she were about to have morning tea at 'Kirk's'. Surely scraped-back hair, a shirt-blouse and skirt were not beyond devising. The opera has an awkward third act. There has been a dramatic and effective climax at the end of the second act and in the third, Magda will turn on the gas-oven, and, before she dies, we will be given a series of flash-backs of happenings in her life. Certainly the music Menotti has written is no help here—one feels that he has spent himself by the end of Act Two—but the scene was played in harsh light and was ineptly handled.

The three main roles, all women, were excellently played and sung. Vincente Major brought a real voice and warmth of feeling

to the part of Magda, Mona Ross acted and sang stylishly as the harassed secretary, Alice Graham played the part of the Mother with imagination. I would like to give a word of praise to Martin Wilson for the careful study he gave to a quite minor part—one of the refugees. One remembers the similar care he gave to a minor part in *Amahl*. There is vitality in this company; in three years they have made fantastic progress. For my part I wish they would continue with opera in English and with contemporary opera.

DOUGLAS LILBURN

Tribute to Stravinsky

IGOR Stravinsky had his seventy-fifth birthday this year, and by way of tribute to the composer and the occasion the New Zealand Section of the International Society for Contemporary Music arranged an evening of his music in the Wellington Concert Chamber on 28 July. Such concerts have been rare enough in any part of the world and this was a unique event in our musical history. Central work of the programme was the *Mass for Mixed Choir and Double Wind Quintet*, a strong and directly beautiful utterance of this composer's credo. Two other major works were the *Octet for Wind Instruments* and the *Concerto for Two Solo Pianos*. These show his more objective side, his virtuosity and good humour, his quirks and occasional dryness, and his striking originality of ideas and tone colour. An enchanting early piece was the *Pastoral for Violin* with its accompanying woodwind quartet, and the 1918 *Ragtime* is a lively record of its day. Most recent work was the *In Memoriam, Dylan Thomas*, a stylized, wonderfully apt and moving setting of the poem 'Do not go gentle into that good night'.

All this was obviously work by a master craftsman, vital, ordered and compelling. Some of it, and other chamber works have been heard in Wellington before on rare occasions. Inevitably the performances have had some rough edges, but the generally good and convincing account of the music given by singers and instrumental-

ists has shown that it can readily be performed here, that it can win enthusiasm from an audience. But there's so much of it still to be heard. The National Orchestra has given a sparkling performance of *Firebird* in Wellington but is now resting on its laurels after doing *Petrouchka*. Could it not break in a difficult but splendid work like the *Symphony in C*, or give us that lovely string sound of *Apollo Musagetes?* And how good it would be to hear one of the southern choirs do the *Symphony of Psalms*.

This concert was not widely advertised but about three hundred people turned out for it on the coldest Sunday night of the year. For me it was the first all-Stravinsky concert I've ever had the luck to hear, and memorable for its finely-wrought, vivid and stimulating sounds, for the glimpse it gave of a great contemporary composer's stature. All honour then to Stravinsky, and with it tribute to those who made this concert possible, conductor James Robertson and choir master David Farquhar, a big field of performers, the N.Z.B.S. for their co-operation, and Frederick Page whose idea and direction it was.

E. A. OLSSEN

A Second Chamber and Atomic Tests

DURING the year, and especially during the National Party Conference in August, the case for a second chamber in New Zealand has received a good deal of publicity. Although once partly sympathetic to this cause, the writer now believes that there are better ways of securing the objects which the advocates of a second chamber seek. In particular, there are better ways of meeting the most urgent problem of all—the increasing concentration of power in the hands of cabinet. This development is not peculiar to New Zealand, the reasons for the process are not obscure, and it is conceded that a modern government must possess very extensive powers if it is to carry out its responsibilities efficiently.

Nevertheless, a government's powers may become too great, and there are grounds for believing that this has already happened in New Zealand. This is unfortunate for many reasons. Not least important is the consideration that it induces apathy in the electorate, and jeopardizes both civil and political liberties.

It is proposed to list three examples of things that might be done to counterbalance the present top-heavy power structure. It is submitted that even were a second chamber in existence, these steps would still be necessary; but the proposals really make a second chamber superfluous, and they have the not inconsiderable merit of by-passing those never-ending and intrinsically awkward questions relating to the *composition* and *powers* of a second chamber.

Firstly, the New Zealand Broadcasting Service should be insulated from politics. The National Party Conference did what the soporific Opposition might have been expected to do when it resolved to urge the Government that a Royal Commission should be appointed to sift this question, together with the questions posed by the coming of television. The suggestion is wise and timely. Nobody thinks, of course, that a non-political form of control, whatever shape it may take, would in itself solve problems. But it would open possibilities that hardly exist now, possibilities that the radio might be used to enable critical assessments of policies (domestic and international) to be made. The removal of the stuffy 'no controversy, please' hand of politics from the microphone would in itself do a good deal to lessen the dangers inherent in the present situation.

In the second place, the Annual Report of the Controller and Auditor-General (1957) states that the Audit Office carries out the audit of some 2,250 local authorities and public bodies, and the Reports of the Local Government Commission contain repeated pleas for a drastic reduction in the number of local authorities. If regional order were brought out of this chaos, the way would be opened for local authorities to exercise more comprehensive powers than is now possible. Indeed, those authorities might then perhaps be permitted to do whatever is not forbidden by statute, instead of being restricted, as at present, to do only what they are allowed to do by statute. These changes might be either preparatory to or coincident with the introduction of a more adequate system of local finance. As a beginning, however, why not hand over T.A.B. profits to local authorities, together with the administration of this service? And why not, while we are about it, nationalize the breweries, and place the administration of hotels

in local hands? These not inconsiderable sources of revenue might supplement a cut from radio and television fees, and a share in petrol revenue. The suggestions are admittedly general, but they point towards a solution of what is too often thought of as insoluble. A good deal might be done, then, to strengthen local government; and a strong local government would be one of the best answers to the problems posed by a too great centralization of political power.

Thirdly, the New Zealand Electoral Act of 1956 contained several important reserved provisions. Section 12, for example, fixes the duration of the House of Representatives at three years, and Section 189 states *inter alia* that Section 12 cannot be repealed or amended unless the proposal

(a) Is passed by a majority of seventy-five per cent of all the members of the House of Representatives; or
(b) Has been carried by a majority of the valid votes cast at a poll of the electors of the European and Maori electoral districts.

What needs to be done now, is to build strong and widespread political support for the reserved provisions. This support could be fostered in many ways. Senior High School students might have important legislation of this kind explained to them, for example, and the subject might provide a part of the 'common core' in a University education. Again, Adult Education tutors should be encouraged to bring the matter to the notice of professional groups, factory workers, and urban and rural communities. Aristotle once remarked that a policy that failed to educate its citizens in the spirit of the constitution would not survive. In New Zealand we do very little to ensure the survival of our constitution.

These last remarks have a bearing on the needlessly vexed question of legal sovereignty. It is true that legally Parliament cannot bind itself, but retains power to undo tomorrow what it has done today. The Electoral Act of 1956 might be repealed in the same way as any other piece of legislation might be repealed: and for that matter the House of Commons might tomorrow repeal the Statute of Westminster! At the risk of tautology, it must be insisted, however, that a *legal* sovereign is only a *legal* sovereign; and, with deference to the men of law, it must be stressed that powers which are from a purely legal viewpoint unlimited are, when placed in a moral and political context, subject to very effective practical limits. My point is that by a wise use of our educational system the citizens of today and tomorrow might be made much more conscious than they now are of the meaning of

free institutions; and if this were done it would both solve the problem posed by the spectre of the legal sovereign, and ensure that those who exercise political power exercise it with a proper sense of responsibility.

THE SUPPRESSION OF NUCLEAR TESTS[1]

Chester Bowles, a former U.S.A. ambassador to India, recently gave a series of lectures at Harvard University. These have been published by Oxford for the Harvard University Press under the title *American Politics in a Revolutionary World*. To judge from the English *Listener's* review, it would be a pity if those responsible for New Zealand's foreign policy remained ignorant of Mr Bowles's book. In particular, it is worth noting that he has described the Dulles foreign policy as 'clumsily militaristic', and has deplored the effect of this policy on Asian opinion. He has cited figures to show that in a recent opinion survey in Calcutta, a very large number of people thought that America is the country most likely to start a third world war, whereas hardly anybody thought that the Soviet or Communist China is likely to do so. Mr Dulles's insistence that the U.S.A. will carry out further Pacific nuclear tests will confirm this attitude, and, in fact, has already elicited a strong official protest from Japan. In the meantime, the Soviet agreeably consolidates its already strong position in Asia by reaffirming its request that a stop be put to nuclear tests for a two-year trial period. If the Western Powers, including New Zealand, think that the Soviet is bluffing, why not call the bluff? That, at any rate, would be an indication of our own *bona fides*. But it is not easy to say what is indicated by this country's persistent idolatry of the Dulles SEATO policy, backed up by a further nuclear tests programme. The results of this sort of thing are plain enough. An already estranged powerful group of Asian states are further estranged, and the task of Soviet diplomacy is made alarmingly easy. In response to this situation, bigger and better tests will doubtless be planned. This is not policy: this is confusion.

It has of course been said that the tests will act as a *deterrent* to war. Mr Duncan Sandys, the British Minister of Defence, in fact spent some time in saying this when in New Zealand last September. It is strange that many sober-minded people who normally show a sceptical front to seers and prophets should take this solemnly. How does Mr Sandys *know* that the tests will be a

[1] At the time of writing the Security Council's Sub-Committee on Disarmament has failed to reach any agreement, and the matter is about to be debated in the General Assembly of the U.N.O.

deterrent to war? Is he able to prove that they will not in fact increase the risk of war? Plainly, neither Mr Sandys nor anybody else is in a position to answer these questions with anything like certitude. What may be said with assurance, on the other hand, is that if bombs are not made they cannot be used, and the tests are a necessary part of their manufacture.

George Bernard Shaw once said that Hitler's military and air power would be an effective deterrent to war. It sounds sere and yellow in 1957. If we leave conjecture aside and pay facts the tribute of a glance, we shall learn that the explosion at Hiroshima on 6 August 1945 killed some 100,000 people in an instant of time and that 'another 100,000 (were) wounded, hideously burned, struck by radiation sickness, many of them dying after weeks or months of agonizing pain. Even now the bomb's work is not ended. About 90,000 of the survivors are still under medical supervision, 6,000 must have constant clinical treatment all their lives, and some are still dying of cancer, leukaemia and other delayed effects.'[2] According to reports, the Hiroshima bomb is small beer in comparison with what would now be exploded.

The suppression of the tests would be a step, a pitifully small step, away from Hiroshima and from the present arms race that threatens to reduce a great part of the world to the condition of Hiroshima on an August day in 1945. New Zealand has in the past, not without cause, taken some pride in bespeaking humanitarian policies. Today, in the presence of her watchful Asian neighbours at the General Assembly, this country must choose whether or not it will stand true to that tradition. Indeed, the opportunity is a momentous one: and, if lost, will not soon return.

[2] from House of Commons speech by the Right Hon. Philip Noel-Baker, M.P., 23 July 1957.

Reviews

OWLS DO CRY. Janet Frame. *The Pegasus Press.* 15s.

THE emotional effect of *Owls Do Cry* is such that instead of confining myself to the language of criticism, I feel tempted to talk about life and human suffering, about the values of civilization

and the search for meaning, about the empty heart and the bewildered mind. The disturbing quality of Janet Frame's writing, disturbing at least for the reviewer, is that her novel about a New Zealand family cannot be characterized in a few handy phrases, or suitably tagged for the benefit of those on the prowl for masterpieces.

It is evident, and the evidence echoes from every page, producing overtones to excite and also confuse the reader, that Janet Frame has accumulated a mass of subjective material, impressions about life, vivid perceptions, unanswered questions, attitudes demanding exploration, that she is concerned with the gradations of human sensitivity, with our kinship in suffering, with the pathetic variations of death in life, and with man's pain-swept pilgrimage in search of he knows not what. She had material for social satire, for detailed descriptions of ordinary life, for poetic impressionism, for fantasy; and the material was all connected and interrelated, ready for its destination, if a destination could be found. 'Plot', observes Elizabeth Bowen, 'is the knowing of destination.'

Therefore it would not be true to say that the story of the Withers family, the narrative that with a gap of twenty years follows the fortunes of Francie and Daphne, Toby and Teresa, is an unimportant element of *Owls Do Cry*, for it is at one and the same time a means to an end and the end itself. It provides the necessary pattern of human relationships, aspirations, and events without which no novel can be said to exist. The characters are not abstractions of a mind more concerned with commentary than with life, but are real people in whose fortunes the reader finds himself involved, for Janet Frame is able to establish them in the midst of authentic and seemingly irrelevant detail. They belong to a setting which is recognizable in New Zealand terms; and the town of Waimaru which is 'small as the world and halfway between the South Pole and the Equator' becomes familiar with its flour mill and butter factory, its picture theatre, its girls riding on bicycles to the Woollen Mills, its rubbish dump, and its 'long sweep of furious hungry water'.

What may be disconcerting to those who are ever on the watch for the great New Zealand novel, and assume that a statistically average family will be found at its centre, is that neither the Withers family itself nor the stories of the children can be regarded as typical. It is not merely that poverty and monotony, mental and bodily sickness, tragic death and slow decay, insensitive respectability, murder and vagrancy crowd in upon them, but that of the two major characters with whom we sympathize one is 'brought to the confusion of dream', and the other is 'there and not there, journeying half-way which is all torment'. And yet although the elements of melodrama are present, this is no melodrama. By her manner and method Janet Frame brings us close not to the average

New Zealander but to common humanity in its suffering and search.

It is the shifting angle of vision, the technique employed by Janet Frame, that on a first reading of *Owls Do Cry* presents an obstacle both to understanding and to the 'willing suspension of disbelief', because it is one of those novels, by no means exceptional today, where the parts are dependent on the whole, where as one reads it is necessary to turn the pages backwards as well as forwards. Not only Daphne singing from the dead room, and from time to time her enigmatical songs recur, but many references, images, and refrains become significant only as the book progresses. Each of the four sections into which it is divided requires something in the nature of a major adjustment before the reader can satisfy himself that the reality of dream and the dream of reality, the poetic impression and the self-revelation are parts of a whole. That this major adjustment can be achieved is evidence of the emotional tension generated by the sensitive writing of Janet Frame, but it is also some slight evidence of the reader's patience.

The four children of Amy and Bob Withers are introduced in the section entitled 'Talk of Treasure', and they are introduced by means of a mixture of childish fantasy and perceptive realism; but it is only later that one becomes aware that the unfolding narrative is also providing a symbolic framework to the book. It is this symbolic framework (the clumsy language of criticism can find no better phrase, however ill it may accord with the creative experience) which enables the author to escape from the atmosphere of melodrama and the restricted area of the special case to the world of wider significance and human sympathies.

Although in Toby's section we are concerned mainly with the pitiful half-way journeyings of the epileptic brother, and enter into his bewildered solitude, we pass from reality to dream, from commentary to poetic symbolism and echoing refrain; and in Teresa's diary which occupies the third section we are forced to adjust ourselves to the rather conventional device of self-revelation which, although it includes symbolic dreams and a fragment of unexpected poetic impressionism, becomes in the hands of the author a clever and ironic criticism of the false values of the civilization of the sane, as well as a violent contrast to the half-light of Toby and Daphne's confusion of dream. Even in the fourth section of the book, in Daphne's section, the reader must continually alter his gaze as he is transferred from mind to mind, from Daphne's struggles in the dead room with her different realities to the author's impressions, the attendants' attitudes, and the feelings of Toby and Bob Withers.

What I have described as the shifting angle of vision is almost wholly justifiable as a technique which can enrich and make more vivid the reader's apprehension of the strangeness of life, the

enigma of personality, and the variety of human attitude. My doubts are ones that I have experienced to a greater or less degree with other novels, doubts that concern the possibility and the desirability of intermingling different kinds of writing without destroying that willing suspension of disbelief which in any serious and imaginative work is essential for full communication.

From what has been said it will be apparent that there is a further difficulty presented by *Owls Do Cry*, one associated with what I have called the symbolic framework. In 'Talk of Treasure' the rubbish dump near the home of the Withers family, and on which at a later stage in the narrative the house of Teresa Harlow is built, the rubbish dump that was 'like a shell with gold tickle of toi-toi around its edges', becomes not only a part of the children's lives, but an image that by continual use provides a symbol of the human search for treasure, for values, for meaning. It is into the flames of the rubbish dump that Francie, the oldest of the children, rolls; for Francie, Joan of Arc in the school play, 'was waiting to be burned'. The echoes from this cluster of images never cease until the book is ended. Many years later in one of the symbolic dreams that recur through the novel Toby believes he is in a cold apple orchard on a corner of the moon and sits in a circle of toi-toi that is hung with apples of ice, and Daphne appears to him saying: 'We have dug the pit and he who diggeth the pit shall fall into it, but that is only Francie, the witch who dug fire; and Chicks, Teresa now, has filled the pit with silver and copper and gold and three children and Timothy Harlow, and builds a house over the pit, to live there.' On one occasion Teresa records in her diary that she dreamed she was sitting in the middle of the arena at a circus, and on another that she was in a waste and desert land, and in her dream appeared an Arab girl with a feather of toi-toi in her hand, and Teresa wished to be 'a little girl again with dark hair and a dirty spotted pinafore, sitting in the rubbish dump' where they once hunted for treasure.

But the treasure, the flames, the toi-toi, and the rubbish dump are not by any means the only 'objective correlatives' in *Owls Do Cry*, for images and refrains weave and interlace through the structure of the whole book. One thinks of refrains from Blake, from Shakespeare, from fairy tales. One thinks of the carrot seed that never came up, of the dancing of Francie and Daphne, of the rocking horse and the leather strap, of the glass windows, and the lost fur coat and the lost shadow, of the images of time as the days, months and years escape from the calendar which is called by the children a colander, of Amy Withers at the wash-tub and the inmates of the dead house crushed in the laundry under the mangle that is time.

Refrains and images echo and re-echo. Sometimes they seem too contrived though the emotional effects accumulate; sometimes

they contribute more to the formal pattern than to the meaning; and frequently they become caught up in what appears to be the wrong angle of vision. At one time they may be part of the natural and probable thoughts of the character, but at another they are thrust into the character's mind by the author, and again they may belong to the author's disguised commentary; that is to say the symbolic structure of the book shifts with the angle of vision, and becomes confused in it.

Refrains and images echo and re-echo, dominated by the controlling images of the search for treasure, the journeyings across wood and concrete seas, and the quest for the 'real how and where and who and why in the circle of the toi-toi'. It is Daphne who thinks, 'If I travel a hundred miles to find treasure, I will find treasure. If I travel a hundred miles to find nothing, even if I bring money with me, to lay down in exchange, I will find nothing.' *Owls Do Cry* is a novel that is Talking of Treasure when Owls Do Cry.

If it appears to be too carefully patterned, too much a mosaic of fragments, if the mixture of different kinds of writing and the continual shifting of the angle of vision cause some discomfort, it is well to remember that as Elizabeth Bowen says, 'The novelist is confronted, at a moment (or what appears to be the moment: actually its extension may be indefinite) by the impossibility of saying what is to be said in any other way.' Better thus than not at all, for *Owls Do Cry* is sincerely and deeply felt. It is a pitiful, a tragic book, but it glows with the light of a poetic vision of life, and the epilogue links the reader who also may be seeking 'the real how and where and who and why in the circle of the toi-toi' with the lives of its characters. It is not only Daphne and Toby and Teresa who in their different ways are drawn to the circle of the toi-toi.

H. Winston Rhodes

THEATRE IN DANGER. A Correspondence between Bruce Mason and John Pocock. *Paul's Book Arcade*. 8s. 6d.

THE arrangement of this book appears to suggest that by writing letter one Mr Pocock secured an initial advantage over Mr Mason. He leads off so effectively, that for a preliminary reading this reviewer hastily skimmed over Mr Mason's reply in order to follow up the first line of argument. Nor was there any disappointment. Mr Pocock's third and final letter in particular is excellently done, a lucid piece of writing which explains exactly where he stands in relation to the theatre.

When he was a student in the mid-forties, it was Mr Pocock's good fortune to be closely associated with Miss Ngaio Marsh's Little Theatre at Canterbury University College: as a con-

sequence he 'suffers from the memory of a small but unmistakable Golden Age'; and he emphasizes that despite his experience of theatre abroad, his adherence to what he regards as fundamental principle in matters of theatrical production is derived from this early association. He has paid his respects to 'the great and famous doing their memorable stuff in London Stratford Edinburgh or Paris', but the kind of theatre he wants to see is that 'which rigorously subordinates its techniques of production to the thing it actually has to say: to the pattern of speech which determines the essential form of every play not a mime or ballet.' According to him, we can discover the intentions of the playwright only through the words that he uses, and the text of a play is therefore primary; but this principle is lost sight of when a producer relies overmuch on what he can do with modern resources of lighting and decoration, not to mention the egotistical tricks of his actors. The result is theatrical decadence. Mr Pocock concedes that there might be some qualification to his principle (perhaps 'the language of theatrical communication need not be exclusively verbal?'), and quotes with limited approval some remarks by Kenneth Tynan: 'Chekhov proved that in the theatre words were not paramount but auxiliary, not tyrants but collaborators. . . .' But by and large it is within the framework of his belief in the primacy of the word that Mr Pocock builds up his argument: and it follows that he is much concerned to discuss the kind of speech which will be most effective in achieving satisfactory theatrical communication. He by no means rejects prose dialogue, but most of all he wants to hear and see the verse play; and although he has some difficulty in exactly defining the kind of verse he wants, he is clear about the kind he doesn't want. Relying somewhat heavily on Yeats, he is anti-Fry because he dislikes verse which tends to be an additional decoration; and he is anti-Eliot (the later Eliot, that is), because he remains unsatisfied by verse in the disguise of ordinary cultivated speech. The emergence of a satisfactory kind of speech would however probably require a changed attitude on the part of theatre audiences; people would have to attend the theatre prepared to accept whatever theatrical convention might be necessary in order to make the right kind of theatrical speech a possibility; and further, the theatrical audience would have to rediscover its capacity for *enjoying* any such fruitful convention. (It is interesting that Mr Pocock, who was intimately connected with the first production of Mr Allen Curnow's verse play, *The Axe*, at the Christchurch Little Theatre, should have a high regard for that play; apparently for him, it fulfilled in production his requirements to quite a degree; to this reviewer, with only the text to judge by, it remains a somewhat chilly though certainly not uninteresting exercise in play-wrighting.)

So much for a brief summary of Mr Pocock's argument, and I apologise for attempting to circumscribe so much detail while I present a few remarks of my own. If the theatre is taken in its historical context, is the verbal text primary? It seems to me that what is primary in the theatre is make-believe, or if you like, illusion (a word by the way which I don't see mentioned in this book, but which is approvingly used by Mr Pocock in his 'A Word for the Proscenium', printed in *Landfall* No. 14). What could be more primarily theatrical than a Punch and Judy show? —which I am rash enough to assert is the best that Europe has to offer in the way of theatrical perfection. But what is primary is related to what is primitive, and if we admit the itch to move on to something more highly developed, I agree with Mr Pocock that the greatest theatrical achievements would appear to depend almost entirely upon the spoken word. Nevertheless, I doubt whether the major emphasis must always be on the playwright's text. In some cases yes, in others no. What about plays in translation? How can we know whether or not we get anything like what the playwright intended? And yet how much poorer off we would be without what we get. But take some English-language play with a reputation for 'good theatre'. *The Second Mrs Tanqueray*, for example. I imagine that although one would be sorry to lose a few good lines, the theme is a gift which would lend itself to almost any variation of dialogue. Shaw on the other hand is quite different. A very complex intelligence is at work throughout the dialogue, and any tampering with the text should be promptly interdicted. (And yet, I remember when Miss Thorndike played *Saint Joan* at Auckland in the early thirties, she said in her final speech: 'O God who madest this beautiful world. . . .' and Shaw, for me at any rate, had contrived to suggest his obsessional Life Force by writing: 'O God that madest etc.' Too fine a point perhaps, but who was closer to the character of the saint, the actress or the playwright?)

Mr Mason's part in the book is quite different from Mr Pocock's —he is a kind of stooge for his correspondent to sharpen his wits on. He is lively but erratic; courageous but rash; and he is much preoccupied with seeing himself in the role of leader, on the long snub-collecting hitch-hike to the theatrical Promised Land. Perhaps one might remark that even Shakespeare, according to some, was a committee. He explains in detail how he writes his plays, but there is an opposite method which has always struck me as much the sounder. 'There is a great difference between a poet who seeks the particular for the sake of the universal, and one who sees the universal in the particular. From the former method comes Allegory where the particular is used only as an example, an instance of the universal; but the latter is the true method of poetry. It expresses a particular without a thought of or a

reference to the universal. But whoever has a living grasp of this particular grasps the universal with it, knowing it either not at all, or long afterwards.'

Frank Sargeson

WORLD REGAINED. Dennis McEldowney. *Chapman and Hall.* 10s. 6d.

THE dust-cover gives an alternative title—'A Blue Baby tells his story'—which, in its simplicity, sums up the author's situation rather more completely than I had hoped when I learned he was a New Zealander who regained his world at the age of twenty-four after spending all but his earliest years in bed. There seemed to be obvious intellectual implications, as well as an extraordinary opportunity for reporting on New Zealand life. However, though Mr McEldowney writes in a straightforward way, is clearly aware of these possibilities, and at least indicates that it is in his power to cope with them—he is well read, disposed to be reflective and unconditionally interested in what goes on about him—his short book, in fact, candidly settles for the operation that gave him physical freedom and apparently excited popular attention at the time.

This focal point of chance personal prestige does give him the licence of a wide range over his environment, but it betrays him into being unselective, and limits him to a simplicity of approach which slips sometimes into superficiality, sometimes into incredible naiveté. In other words, no observation is permitted to stand on its own merits, but must always be dependant on the thin invalid 'I' to a greater or lesser degree. Where constraint was least one could see the hand of an honest, quite sensitive observer. What a pity he invested his authority in his operation and invalidity and devoted so much space to the directly medical aspects of the story. Of course a patient has a point of view of his own, but, putting aside the inherent difficulties of emphasis and interpretation if a professionally exact account is attempted, I suspect it takes medical training, or else a sense of drama or humour transcending the technical events, to make dealings with the medical profession interesting.

What emerges is the quality of the prose, which is worth far more than the temporary sensation of the operation. It has the run of conversational fluency with a care for exact expression, the desirable combination of discipline and vitality. It was worth more care. Some long sentences have overburdened antecedents, to the extent of being difficult to understand, and ungrammatical more than once; and often more contriving is needed, for instance,

to avoid weak openings and ungraceful repetitions. The book did not, however, need the deceptive assistance of flippancy or the use of expressions which convey intellectual sophistication—without further elucidation they become clichés only. Neither device was suited to Mr McEldowney's natural bent for simplicity and sincerity. He writes well; too well to allow him any of the leniency that might be prompted by his situation; and certainly well enough to dispose of any 'stern Malthusian doubts' he may cast upon the operation.

Deirdre Airey

THE MIND AND ART OF COVENTRY PATMORE. J. C. Reid. *Routledge & Kegan Paul.* 35s.

MR REID'S achievement, in this book, is one that no New Zealand scholar has previously encompassed; he has made an important contribution towards the understanding of a quite considerable poet. In the midst of a good deal of academic (and sometimes, unfortunately, journalistic) window-dressing, the heart of his work is found in two chapters on Patmore's leading ideas and on his doctrine of love. Here he shows that behind the poet's work lie, neglected, a number of powerful and coherent ideas; and that therefore, although Patmore is not a systematic thinker, his poetry is more significant than we are accustomed to suppose.

To be more precise, Patmore, under the influence of certain intuitions, apparently spontaneous, adopted a coherent set of attitudes towards God, man, and the universe. Later he found his intuitions agreed with the dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church. It was from these intuitions, or from the dogmas that replaced them, that he reasoned; 'dogmas are for him not bonds, but wings', says Mr Reid in a good phrase. And he refused to make a technical defence of them, just as a physicist will refuse to define electricity, because he knew of nothing more fundamental; though he was so little a philosopher that he did not even say that.

One of his earliest intuitions Mr Reid describes as that of law and limitation. Negatively this is felt as a horror of infinity, of formlessness, or of complete freedom; it has affinities, which Mr Reid does not mention, with Kierkegaard. Positively it implies accepting—gratefully, not with resignation—the limits of human life, the bounds set both to the individual and to the race and to their separate activities; beauty and happiness alike come from observing the rules of aesthetics or morals. Again, the soul is limited by the body; and the exemplary case of limitation is offered by God, Who in the Incarnation for man's sake limited Himself by a body and consented to be known after a limited

fashion. As a natural consequence, Patmore revered the human body, its discipline of the soul, its capacity for pleasure, and its bounds laid down by pain. He invincibly tended to regard material reality as the analogy of reality itself; he therefore delighted in the advance of scientific knowledge (the superbly level-headed passage on the 'higher criticism' and the evolution of species, quoted by Mr Reid on p. 134, will surprise some readers), but he assigned a very different value to it from his contemporaries. It 'presents a type of knowledge which the spiritual sight must receive mainly, if not wholly, as parables' (Mr Reid, not Patmore) —parables of that which the saints, from a different viewpoint, also explore, the true reality of which our only certain knowledge is Revelation.

Here we must introduce another of Patmore's fundamental intuitions. Everywhere he saw an opposition, and a possible reconciliation, between two principles that he named 'male' and 'female', but that might equally well be called active and passive, or rational and emotional, or even form and content, so wide is the sweep, so numerous the examples, of this antithesis. (They might also be called the limit and the limited: which would very nearly identify this fundamental intuition with the other.) This intuition arose from his happy experience of love in marriage, that 'indissoluble union of mind, heart and body' which throughout his poetic creation he explored and explained. To propose the love of God for the soul as an example for human love was no new thought; 'it is Patmore's distinction' (says Mr Reid on p. 152) 'that he made the process a two-way one, and restored the dignity of wedded love as both symbol and prophecy of the love between Christ and the soul.' To achieve its fulness, however, love must subject itself to limits, and first to that set by respect for the marriage-partner: 'great and gracious ways' are part of perfect love, as opposed to excessive, almost contemptuous familiarity. It must also keep unshakable fidelity, no matter what disillusionments may await it; while on the other hand fidelity, even without the fulness of love, can make a true marriage and, with perseverance, may receive the grace of love in its perfection, as it does in 'The Victories of Love'.

Even when love seems to have conquered (in Mr Reid's phrase) 'desire, frigidity, custom, convention and all other kinds of difficulties', however, it is never, in Patmore's view, complete, never more than a precursor of a greater love not of this world. (Here the love of this world presumably ceases to be an analogy of that of heaven.) The souls which on earth have loved as male or female, active or passive, are all destined to play the female role of response to the active love of God, in the eternal relationship that already binds to God the exemplar of perfected humanity, the Blessed Virgin Mary.

One trusts that even silly people will no longer, as they have done, call Patmore 'the laureate of the tea-cups'. He is a man whose beliefs and opinions, in general, are among those to which Englishmen of today are prepared to commit themselves. Both his religion and his politics (government he considered a 'male' activity, and he had a Tory idea of masculinity) enjoy quite widespread support in thoroughly respectable quarters in this country. However it may be in America and New Zealand, here Mr Reid's evident embarrassment with Patmore's political views seems merely unnecessary. They are clearly all of a piece with his other opinions, and they might have been allowed to stand up for themselves. Further, while one agrees that his politics do not necessarily go with his religion (surely Mr Reid is not embarrassed by the vulgar prejudice that all Catholics are reactionaries?), it would have been interesting to see how he deduced them from his basic intuitions.

The rest of the book is unfortunately not up to the standard of the excellent chapters that I have discussed. There is, however, a good bibliography of Patmore's works, including a dated list of his contributions to magazines, which must have involved a great deal of work of the dullest kind. Apart from this, it must be said that the account of 'influences' on Patmore's thought is sadly unincisive, that the chapters on the poetry itself are short of direct analysis and consist mainly of criticism of criticism, and that consistency of style is not a virtue of Mr Reid's prose.

D. M. Anderson
Birmingham

THE ANCIENT CONSTITUTION AND THE FEUDAL LAW. J. G. A. Pocock. *Cambridge University Press.* 30s.

THE study of the history of historiography is a sophisticated one. For most historians it is enough to study history itself; to attempt to tell a true story of what men have done and thought in the past. Inevitably they are also concerned with historiography, which examines the aims of history, and the technique of writing it. But the history of historiography is at one further remove. For here the modern historian is deducing from the writings of past historians attitudes of mind, and methods of working, of which they themselves may have been only partially aware. As Dr Pocock says, so erudite a discipline is 'still in process of establishing itself, and it has been said that in England its main problems are not yet even defined. . . .'

Yet this book is not even a straightforward study in seventeenth century historiography. It is an attempt to isolate in the

historical writing of that period evidence of a single strand of thinking about a particular historical problem. Indeed much of the peculiar quality of the book derives from the impression it gives that the writer has as it were traced a single vital thread, which no one before him had noticed, through a closely woven fabric; and, in doing so, had demonstrated that this one thread determined much of the character of the cloth as a whole. It need hardly be said that such a book requires very careful reading. Not only is the subject matter unfamiliar to most students of general history, but the argument is so taut and close that the mind cannot slide over a single sentence without losing track of the argument. Few historians use words with such precision as Dr Pocock.

The main theme of the book is the impact of a new historical concept on the way in which educated Englishmen of the seventeenth century looked at their own past. In every age men look at history with some of the preoccupations and prejudices of their own environment: thus many modern historians have been guided in their studies by an awareness of the contemporary importance of economic and social issues. For the lawyer, statesman or antiquary of the time of Sir Edward Coke the dominant influence was their knowledge of the common law of England. Because most of them, whether or not they were practising lawyers, had been trained at the Inns of Court, it was natural for them to find their closest link with the past in the continuity of case law and the antiquity of the courts and parliament. If they were to undertake any serious study of the past, it was almost certain that they would be led to it, and guided in their attitude towards it, by a desire to examine more fully the origins and development of the common law in the middle ages.

With this problem the age of the first two Stuarts was deeply concerned, for the interpretation of legal and constitutional precedents was of vital importance in contemporary politics. Every *cause célèbre* of the period, from Bates's case to Ship Money, was argued in terms of mediaeval history. But the arguments were not historical as we understand history: and in his two chapters on 'The Common-law Mind'—which are perhaps the most generally useful in the book—Dr Pocock gives a lucid analysis of why this was so. At root, the trouble was that lawyers like Coke believed that their laws, and therefore their constitution, were 'immemorial': that they had never been created by an act of will or power, but that they had existed in fundamentally the same form beyond the limits of knowable history. Their origins, it was held, lay in the custom of the people which, evolving over long stretches of time by a process which we might call 'natural selection', had given the law a quality of wisdom beyond the capacity of mere reason to equal. Thus the common law was ancient and proved

custom; enforced, but not made, in the courts; interpreted, but again not made, as statute by Parliament. Taken collectively, this was the myth of the 'ancient constitution' from which the title of the book derives.

No modern historian could take such a view seriously, for he knows that the origins of law and constitution alike can be studied piecemeal in the middle ages. But even to be aware that this was possible would have been a major discovery for the early seventeenth century. Dr Pocock argues that the difficulty arose from the insularity of English law. While French and Scottish lawyers were forced by the very diversity of law within their own countries to examine the relative importance of Roman and customary law, and to think about them historically, the English lawyers could hold that their law was uniform and native in origin. In fact, however, although there had been no 'reception' of Roman law into England, there had once been an infusion of a totally alien body of law and custom. For, in 1066, the Normans had brought with them a whole body of well-developed feudal institutions and customs, which they had imposed onto Anglo-Saxon society. And Dr Pocock argues that it was only through the intellectual acceptance of the fact of this feudal influx that English historical thought could escape from its inhibiting belief in the myth of the 'ancient constitution'.

The remainder of the book is therefore a study of the way in which successive English scholars came to understand that Norman feudalism was indeed alien to England; and that it was consequently impossible for the historian to hold that every part of the English constitution of the seventeenth century was indigenous and old beyond knowledge. The line begins with Sir Henry Spelman who, following French and Scottish commentators on feudal laws, first among Englishmen could state that 'Feudal burdens were first introduced into Britain by William I . . .; who, bringing this law with him from Normandy, divided up all England among his companions. . . . From that time we hear constantly of all the obligations of feudal tenure, which are unknown in the Saxon epoch.' Here, one would have thought, was a decisive and unequivocal acceptance of historic fact, a breaking through the intellectual barricade, which should have ended the myth of immemorial custom. But the forces of conservatism were strong: and the political crisis of the mid-century made it appear suicidal to admit that the law and constitution had ever been at the mercy of a conquering king of England. Parliamentarians and royalists alike clung resolutely to the traditional myth of an ancient constitution for which both claimed to be fighting: and for another fifty years English historical thinking remained rivetted to outworn concepts. Dr Pocock traces elements of the feudal idea in an exciting chase through the leading writers of this 'inter-

regnum': Harrington, Hobbes, Selden, Filmer and Sir Matthew Hale are examined for evidence of enlightenment; and on each the author has much of intrinsic interest to say. But the trail seems very thin. Although each of these men rejected or modified the older concept of the constitution, none did so precisely on the grounds that it was unhistorical. And, since it is Dr Pocock's thesis that the myth could only be dispelled by an argument attacking it on its own premises, which none of these writers produced, it remained for John Brady to give the myth its *coup de grâce* in the polemic conditions of the Exclusion controversy. After his definitive restatement and expansion of Spelman's ideas it was practically impossible for anyone to maintain that the English constitution was in all respects immemorial: and, in due course, it would now be possible for his successors to write a balanced history of England in the middle ages. In the event, however, Brady was to prove to be the killer of an old tradition rather than the founder of a new historical school; and the last chapter of the book examines some of the reasons which left it to the nineteenth rather than the eighteenth century to incorporate the concept of 'the feudal law' into the history of mediaeval England.

In general terms, this is a work of first-rate scholarship, and of a most unusual kind. Many men have studied English thought in the seventeenth century; but none had previously examined in detail the impact of the knowledge of feudal institutions on the attitude of men to the problems of their own times. Of some historical monographs it may be said that their value lies largely in the novelty of the material they present; and sometimes even that the writer has added little to the card-index with which he may be presumed to have begun. Dr Pocock's book lies at the other extreme. Apart from a few MS references in the chapter on Brady, the source materials are readily available in print: indeed this fact made it possible for much of the book to be written in Dunedin. Its originality lies in its approach, deriving from an acuteness of historical perception, which sees the significant where others have seen only the peculiar; and from erudition, which can follow a faint trail through sometimes improbable sources. The book throws light into hitherto dark and unexplored aspects of seventeenth century thought, and significantly helps the historian in his attempt to think back into the minds of the men who were thrashing out the great political and ideological issues of the age.

It is perhaps ungrateful to end on a note of criticism; but it must be remarked that the author has not been well served by the Cambridge University Press as regards the binding of this book. It must also be regretted that there is no bibliography. Although the footnoting as a whole is an adequate guide to the sources used, there are occasions when a full bibliography would be of use: as,

for example, when the first and only 'full' reference to the complete edition of Hobbes (p. 163) does not supply the name of the editor, or the date and place of publication. Presumably this is Molesworth's edition of 1839. But in a book of this importance, in which, incidentally, minor textual errors seem unusually absent, this would seem a poor economy.

D. K. Fieldhouse

THE SICILIAN ORIGIN OF THE ODYSSEY. A study of the topographical evidence. L. G. Pocock. *New Zealand University Press.* 10s.

NEARLY seventy years ago Samuel Butler began to read the *Odyssey* for the first time since he had left school, and made the intuitive discovery that it was written by a woman. As he examined the poem in search of proof of his theory, he further decided that it was written at Trapani, in the north-west of Sicily. His theories were not more strange than some others that the great 'Homeric Question' had produced, but the academic world did not even bother to refute them. When some years later Benjamin Farrington tried to support them he only made the position worse, for his arguments about the authorship were more futile than Butler's.

Topographical questions are not easy to decide without first-hand knowledge of the localities, and Butler's case for Trapani was spoilt by its relation to his case for an authoress. Now at last a classical scholar has come forward to support the parts of Butler's arguments that are worth supporting. L. G. Pocock does not concern himself with the authoress, nor does he accept more than Butler's main topographical thesis. His own investigations on the spot have suggested the superficiality of Butler's approach, yet he is prepared to give Butler 'the credit for making the most important discovery in the whole history of Homeric scholarship'.

In his first chapter Professor Pocock compares the neighbourhood of Trapani with the Odyssean Scheria, and emphasizes the inadequacy of Corcyra, the traditional Scheria. He then proceeds to demonstrate the superiority of the Trapani area over Ithaki and Leucas as a model for the Odyssean Ithaca as well. Chapter III is a reprint of Professor Pocock's earlier pamphlet, *The Landfalls of Odysseus*. Finally there is a chapter of addenda, and a brief conclusion. The text is well supported with maps, sketches and photographs, and there is an index.

Professor Pocock writes with enthusiasm, and regards his hypothesis as certain to be proved, and it must be allowed that he has assembled an impressive amount of detail to support it. Moreover,

he points out his own omissions, and it is to be hoped that he will have the opportunity to do more about them.

Perhaps the worst feature of this book is its diffuse and repetitive character, mainly due to the retention of the original form of *The Landfalls of Odysseus*, and the need to make various revisions presumably after the process of publication had started. It is a pity that the whole could not have been delayed for a while for integration. This would undoubtedly have added to the force of the argument. Another lesser point of criticism about the layout of the book is the inconsistency in the use of Greek words and phrases, sometimes in Greek letters and sometimes in an English transliteration. In most passages using the latter the Greekless reader is no better off than if the Greek alphabet had been used, for he will still need to rely on the translations offered.

The main difficulty facing the author of a book of this kind is the subjectivity which is essential to so much of the argument. This is most noticeable in a case such as the description of Ithaca, where two different scenes must be combined. However fascinating the correspondence of Asteris and Formice, however tempting the thought of the author's providing humorous clues, one must still leave room for the suspicion that the poet is conjuring up a completely imaginary scene. One wonders, too, how soon conditions in the Greek colony at Trapani would be favourable to the production of an epic masterpiece, but we know so little of such matters, even after the work of Parry and Dunbabin, that this point cannot be pressed as a serious objection.

Professor Pocock's book makes fascinating and provocative reading, and should stimulate closer study of the Odyssey, in itself a worthwhile result. It is to be hoped that its good points will not be ignored because of a superficial connection with Samuel Butler's efforts.

K. L. McKay

Correspondence

To The Editor

Sir: In his timely article on local history in New Zealand, Mr W. J. Gardner, in passing, airily dismisses the 'Whig' history of Reeves. It would be hard to deny that, despite his admirable attempt to be impartial, Reeves wrote largely from the Liberal point of view—though that is a century and many latitudes away from the Whig. But Mr Gardner goes on to assure us that the 'oligarchs', the 'squattocracy', and the 'bourgeois radicals' existed only in the pages

of the *Lyttelton Times*, and were not 'facts'. This strikes me as an extraordinary assertion. I should like to ask him what he means; and what evidence leads him to this conclusion.

The nearest dictionary tells me that 'oligarchy' means 'government by the few'. Surely, from 1856 to 1890 our public affairs were, in general, managed by a few families—the Richmonds, Atkinsons, Bells and so on. This is not a conclusion which arises from the study of 'schematic history', whether Marxist or Whig. Several Auckland students have written admirable, detailed theses on Auckland local history which show that this Province was run by—and largely for—a small number of business-men and land speculators. My general reading would suggest that Auckland was not unique.

'Squattocracy' means, presumably, government by squatters; and a 'squatter' in New Zealand (as in the dictionary) was, in one sense, a person leasing Crown pasturage. Surely, in both Islands, such persons, though they had no monopoly of government, exercised a very considerable influence in our politics. And finally, were Robert Stout, W. P. Reeves, George Fowlds, John Ballance, and dozens of other lawyers, journalists, and shop-keepers of their time—'single taxers', land nationalizers and Knights of Labour—really 'myths'? I should have thought them to be 'bourgeois radicals'.

It's all very well looking for the 'grass roots' of our history; but don't let's shun generalizations as the ostrich (or moa) shuns danger.

Keith Sinclair

SIR: I have been asked by Mrs Humphry House, editor of the Pilgrim edition of the letters of Charles Dickens, to make an appeal to any institutions or individuals in this country who may have in their possession correspondence of Charles Dickens or letters relating to him. Already material has been supplied by the Dunedin Public Library, the Alexander Turnbull Library and the Auckland Public Library, and I have been able to locate other correspondence in private hands. I should be glad if anybody owning Dickens letters would communicate with me so that arrangements may be made for microfilm copies to be made. In each case, full acknowledgements will be made in the printed work.

The aim of the editors of this edition is to publish as complete a collection of correspondence as possible. It may interest admirers of Dickens to know that to date 10,344 letters have been located (as compared with 5,800 in the Nonesuch edition). The work will be published in eight volumes, of which the first two should be ready for publication in 1960.

J. C. Reid
Auckland University College

SIR: It is impossible in a note of protest to mention all the excellencies of Denis Glover's *Since Then*, which was reviewed so casually in the September *Landfall*. Lines such as 'For those who work at a mystery and believe' and 'That soil we bled upon/So desperately was our own' themselves would make the book important. But over-shadowing even virile poems like 'Towards Banks Peninsula' and 'The Invaded' stands a group remarkable for its breadth of vision and its religious depth and power. It includes 'Flame', 'The Men of Old', 'The Mother of Christ' and, perhaps uplifted again from them, the Canterbury poem 'Mountains and the Sea'. This poem stems from a great deep dreaming. It is linking the present with an ancient but immanent past. Is New Zealand writing so rich it can treat such work lightly?

John Caselberg

NEW CONTRIBUTORS

Deirdre Airey was born in Christchurch in 1926 and graduated in medicine at Otago University, where she edited several student journals. For the last four years she has been working in hospitals in England.

David Anderson. Born 1934 in Invercargill and educated there and at Otago University. Now teaching at Southland Boys' High School.

John Boyd. Born in 1933. Worked as an accounts clerk for five years after leaving school; at present completing a degree at Victoria University College and working as a postman. Has published stories and poems in *Numbers, Arena, Spike* and *Experiment.*

John Dunmore. Born in France in 1923, schooled in England, came to N.Z. in 1950. Has produced and acted for various amateur groups in England and N.Z. Is at present doing post-graduate research in Pacific history at Victoria University College. His play, *A Masque for Old Bones,* was recently produced by the N.Z.B.S.

Michael Ellis. Born and educated in England; settled in N.Z. in 1937; age 43. A journalist with interests in carpentry, gardening, 18th and 19th century literature. His book *The Score at Tea-time,* a melodrama with a moral, has just been published by Peter Davies.

Desmond Mahoney. Born 1920 in the Bay of Plenty. Educated by Ngatea District High School and bitter experience, starting as cadet reporter in 1936. Army service 1941-4, editor *The Te Aroha News* 1944-8, studied piano to Associate Trinity College level. Joined *Evening Post* 1949, appointed music critic; joined *Auckland Star* as music critic and feature writer 1954; awarded Imperial Relations Trust bursary in journalism 1955-6, involving visit to Great Britain and the Continent.

K. L. McKay. Born in Sydney 1922 and educated there and at Queen's College, Cambridge. Lecturer in Classics, University College, Ibadan, Nigeria, 1950-6; now lecturer in Classics at Victoria University College.

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Italy. Volume I. The Sangro to Cassino. N. C. Phillips. Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War 1939-45. Wellington: War History Branch, Department of Internal Affairs. 25s.

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